Webspinner
c/o Box 1573, Edmonton, Alta., T5J 2N7

Inside This Issue

Summer School For Women Organizing.....p. 5-7

Women converged on Silver Creek Ranch at Water Valley June 17 to 26 for the Summer School for Women Organizing. Many activities highlight the nine-day school, including an on-going workshop to produce this issue of Webspinner.

Debra Lewis On The New Sexual Assault Law .....p. 9-11

B.C. activist Debra Lewis was one of two keynote speakers at the Ending the Silence conference in Edmonton May 27-29. Her talk covered battery, pornography and her assessment of the new sexual assault legislation, which she feels may prove more a step backwards than forwards.

Sexism On The Alberta Judiciary .....p. 12-13

Two recent rape trials--one in Grande Prairie and one in Lethbridge--are but two examples of the sexist and archaic attitudes prevailing amongst Alberta judges. Some of these judges are entrusted with setting the new precedents under the new sexual assault legislation.

Kate Millett On Violence Against Women.....p. 15-17

American activist Kate Millett attended the recent Ending the Silence conference. The subject of her talk was Pornography, Eroticism and Violence Against Women.

Manitoba Morgentaler Clinic Raided p.20-23

The recent charges brought against the staff of the Manitoba abortion clinic brought to for the number of major court cases now brewing over Canada's abortion law. However, much of the action is aimed at avoiding rather than dealing directly with the real issue.

June 1983

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Webspinner

$1.00 SUMMER SCHOOL EDITION Vol. 1 No. 3

Alberta women end the silence on violence

Our own words

Webspinner. Attention RaeAnne Robertson

Dear RaeAnne:

The Eugene L. Brody Funding Board is pleased to grant the WEB-SPINNER five hundred dollars ($500). We hope that the next production will go as well as the first production. The Board also hopes that you will tell others of our work.

Good luch and much success.

Sincerely yours,
Teresa Gonzales, Vice President
External Affairs, Student's Union,
University of Alberta.

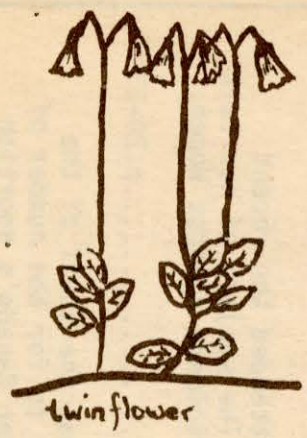
Dear Sisters:

First I'd like to congratulate and thank you for the first issue of Webspinner. I read it from front to back in one sitting, a feat for me, and a whole range of feelings passed through me as I read each article. I wish I could express myself better...but anyway thankyou all.

As a member of Edson Women's Association I am sending you a $30 dollar donation. We just put together our first newsletter here, and I was a small part of it, and realize now the amount of work that goes into such a venture.

Good Luck.

In friendship,
Myrna Meyer, Edson.



Dear Webspinner:

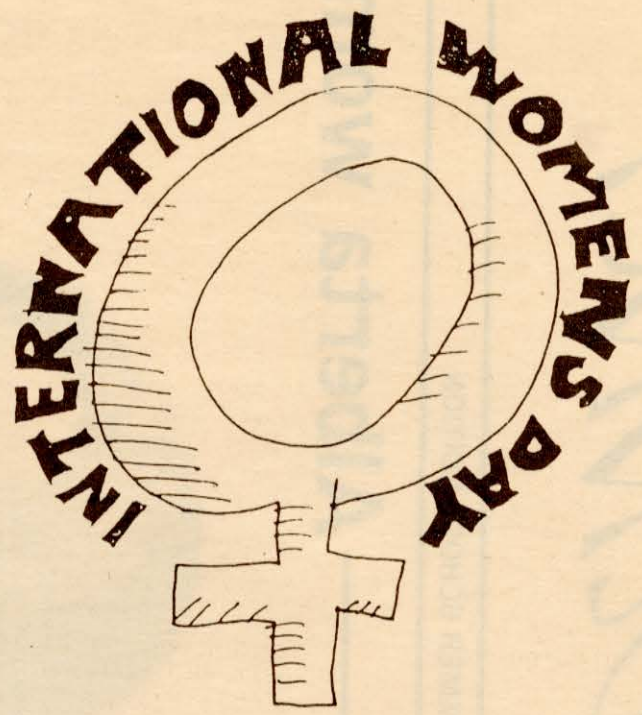
I love the mix of content in the second issue. It reflects the many ways in which women experience and work...a worthy successor to the first issue, which documented and shared a Webspinner's memorable birth.

Congratulations especially on the clear and fast feminist analysis of the capers of our "democratic" government. The "grey eminences" look more boring than ever.

This is truly a women's newspaper! Thank you.

In sisterhood,
Julie Anne Le Gras, Edmonton.

GOT SOMETHING TO SAY????????
ABOUT WEBSPINNER OR THE STATE
OF WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE IN GENERAL?
We'd love to hear from
you...send your correspondence,
ideas, etc. to:
WEBSPINNER
c/o Box 1573
Edmonton, Alta. T5J 2N7



For the fifth consecutive year, women in Edmonton celebrated International Women's Day with a march from the Legislature to Sir Winston Churchill Square, an evening social and various other events throughout the week of March 8th. Our theme was "Women Against the Economic Crisis".

The IWD committee has since had two meetings to evaluate our organizing efforts and though we can certainly point to several positive aspects, the overall feeling of the Committee is that this year's celebration was not a success and that something is very, very wrong in Edmonton.

Moreover, we suspect that part of what is wrong lies in unspoken differences between various women's groups in the city around the meaning and purpose of IWD and that these unaired and consequently unresolved conflicts prevent women from uniting effectively on this day.

The question is - what are we going to do? To simply dismiss these feelings and continue blithely on with plans for next year would be highly irresponsible on our part as well as counter-productive.

After much discussion we have decided that we cannot in fact continue without your input. Therefore we are suggesting the following:-

1. That women in Edmonton, whether they participated in IWD this year or not, present their own views and evaluation for publication in the next issue of Webspinner.
2. That as a summer project the IWD committee organize a forum for women in Edmonton to air our differences. This could take place in early autumn.

We are aware that this is a very sensitive topic and that dealing with the issues successfully will be a challenge, to say the least. However, we are also aware of how effectively the opposition is organizing against us and are resolved that destructive divisions within the women's movement ultimately pose an even greater threat to our well-being. In short, it is crucial that we agree on where and how to disagree on particular issues.

You should know that due to the deadline for this issue we were unable to have the above endorsed by all members of the Committee. Any of those women who do not support this are also urged to reply in Webspinner.

At last we have a paper in which to do this. Let's use it!

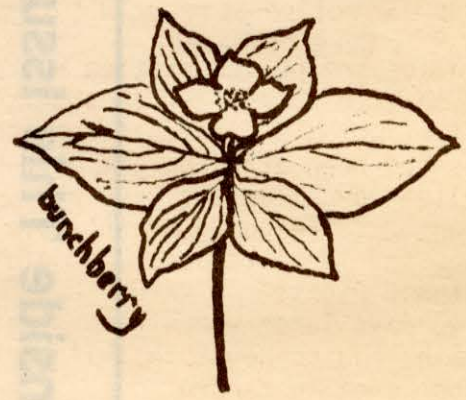
In sisterhood,
Christine Conley
Rona Drennan
Edmonton IWD committee.

P.S. Anyone interested in starting to organize the forum right now can contact us through the ASWAC office.

Dear Webspinner:

Your second issue was exciting.. a good women's newspaper! I especially enjoyed the "special focus" on, and analysis of, the many actions taken by our government recently. The work is worth it (isn't it??) - Keep on!

See you at the Summer School
Ardelle Dudley, Fort Saskatchewan.



Silver Creek Ranch flower sketches
by Barbara Hill

WOMANTIDE

• ICELAND

Feminist party win

By Marilyn Guille

FLASH!! FLASH!! A FEMINIST POLITICAL PARTY WINS THREE SEATS IN THE WORLD'S OLDEST PARLIAMENT!!!

The significance of this event to the Women's Movement hardly needs explanation. This is probably a first in the history of the human race and certainly a first in our struggle. Yet the information was contained--hidden actually--within two paragraphs of a three-column Associated Press story. And it's even complete with a "mug shot" of the male outgoing Prime Minister.

The rest of the article details the gains and losses of the five other parties in the election and most of the last column is actually dedicated to another election in Japan.

This is another prime example of the way in which the (male) media works in its own self-interest and it reinforces the need we have to create our own alternative to that system. If time and energy allows, I intend to pursue this story for a follow-up feature in Webspinner. Who are these women? How did their campaign go? What were/are the issues? How is it working? What *response or support have they* received? That's real news!

• PAKISTAN

Women brutalized

Police attacked about 150 women trying to march to the high court in Lahore, Pakistan, to register their objections to proposed changes in the Evidence Act. These changes were first brought up in 1980 but because of protests they were shelved. The government is keen for them to go through this time but still the protests continue. The proposals include making the evidence of one man equal to two women. If made law, they will have serious implications for women's place in Pakistani society because the Law of Evidence in any Muslim state is the basis of the judiciary system.

The women--mostly lawyers, lecturers and members of women's organizations, were beaten and teargassed as they tried to enter the High Court premises. Thirty-one women were taken to the police station and after three hours were released.

Inside the police station where the women were taken, representatives of various women's organizations whose members had been attacked and held by the police condemned the "use of unwarranted force on women who were only seeking legal recourse to safeguard their rights".

Two days later women demonstrated in Karachi and Peshewar in solidarity with the women in Lahore. In Karachi over 100 women defied martial law regulations and marched with banners calling for an end to the military government.

-From: Spare Rib

• PENNSYLVANIA

Both expect more

More than half the men interviewed by a Pennsylvania State University researcher said they don't think of their wives as their best friends. "It seems men don't like women very much," says Gerald Phillips, a Penn State communications professor and relationship researcher.

The findings are in his recently published book Loving and Living. He says relationships between men and women become strained because both sexes expect more from each other than either can deliver.

"Men expect total dedication, servile attention, sensuality, sexual skill and amusement from their women. Women expect relief from boredom, support and romance from their men. It is simply not to be had," he says. The researcher then draws upon his vast storehouse of deduction skills to explain why this is so: "The major difference between men and women are that men seem to want to be the most valuable player on the winning team while women seek close, long-term relationships.

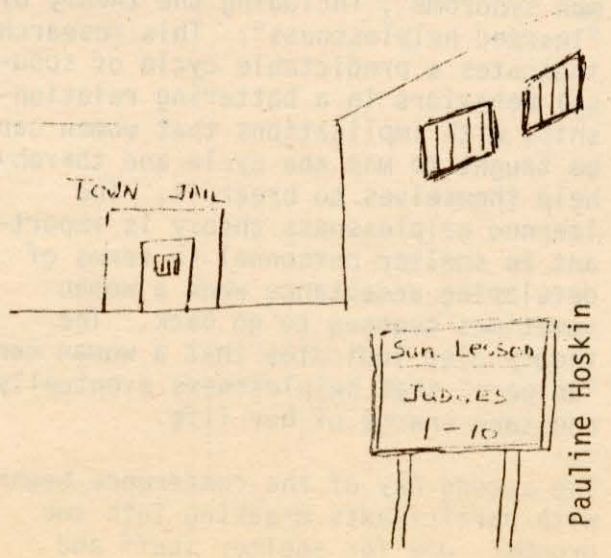
• MILWAUKEE

Bible study useful

An impromptu Bible quiz from the judge resulted in probation for a Milwaukee man charged after he admitted to having sexual relations with his 12-year-old stepdaughter. The man was sentenced by County Circuit Judge Clarence Parrish after he begged for a second chance.

The defendant had prior convictions for manslaughter and grand larceny and admitted fathering two children by another stepdaughter, now 21. But he said he had found Christ through a mail-order Bible course while in the county jail.

-From: Calgary Herald



• WEST YORKSHIRE, U.K.

Protesters harassed

Jalna Hanmer, Diane Hudson and Sheila Saunders are three British women who, along with their children, form a household in West Yorkshire. Two are educators and the third is a socialworker. They are members of the British Sociological Association and of Women's Aid (a shelter for battered women and children). They have been outspoken about what they believe is a disregard on the part of local police for domestic violence and its victims.

On Feb.9, after two previous incidents of harassment, six members of the West Yorkshire police force entered and searched the women's home. They interrogated the women about their lifestyle, political and religious views, damaged some personal belongings and seized others--including important correspondence from

British educators and publishers about a French journal edited by Simone de Beauvoir.

The police justified the search by implying that the women might have been involved in an attempted bombing of Leeds Conservative Party headquarters, but presented no evidence. The "visit" lasted three hours. While the police did have a warrant, they did not need to prove probable cause to obtain it.

This lack of accountability has reportedly allowed significant police harassment of the black, Irish and feminist communities in Britain. While victims of harassment can file complaints, the women maintain that such complaints are not followed up in a responsible manner.

-From: Equal Times

• LONDON

Crime against men?

Male film critics have been completely shocked and outraged by the new feminist film Question of Silence, which is distributed by Cinema of Women in Britain. Phillip French of the Observer, said the story of three women who kill a man was "the unacceptable side of feminism" and went on to worry about the effects the film might have on "young people of average intelligence or less".

Milton Shulman of London's Standard was even more extreme. He shrieked that the film was "an argument which would have justified the Nazi's exterminating the Jews, Herod's slaughter of babies and the lynching of blacks. Genocide is a comparatively modest moral device compared with the ultimate logic of this film".

This is especially ironic given the advertising poster for another film Turkey Shoot which has a man (with gun pointing upwards, needless to say) standing over the dead body of a woman he has killed. Can you imagine the uproar there would be if you reversed the roles or if this kind of poster was used for A Question of Silence.

-From: Spare Rib

Contempt of court

One would think Alberta judges were competing for a prize for the most sexist attitude of statement. Here are a few serious contenders; can you add to the list?

"We think the circumstances were such that it would not have been surprising to that young woman that something might well happen to her going up to the man's apartment between two and three o'clock in the morning, having been drinking all evening with the expressed intention of smoking marijuana and drinking more beer... we think it is a very different situation from the rapist who breaks into somebody's home and attacks them or who picks somebody off the street."

Alta chief justice William McGillivray.

"Whether the complainant in the case before me was motivated (to lay rape charges) by a fit of pique over having failed to attain climax during the sexual intercourse with the Accused...or by his having called her a whore, it is not for me to speculate". and

"She demonstrated emotional instability on the witness stand and ...she repeatedly resorted to fits of sobbing and tears, not only when confronted with contradictions and inconsistencies in her evidence, but frequently for no discernable reason at all. It is a matter of some concern to the Court that the complainant admitted in cross-examination to in effect being coached or briefed for trial by a Rape Crisis group. It seems to me that ought to be left to Crown counsel and the judicial process".

Judge Moshansky, Lethbridge.

"I am of the view, and I believe it is common ground, that the degree of trauma associated with a sexual attack is affected by the relationship, if any, between the parties. And I think it cannot be said that the trauma suffered by the victim is as great where there nas been a history of lawful sexual relations with the accused as it would be if she were attacked by a stranger".

Judge Ken Staples, Grande Prairie.

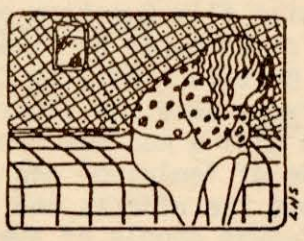
And then there was the Edmonton judge who recently sentenced a woman to three months imprisonment for condoning her husband's incest with her daughter. She told her daughter, in effect, "If you tell on Daddy, the police will come and take him away and he will go to prison." (The husband was arrested and received a sentence of several years imprisonment).

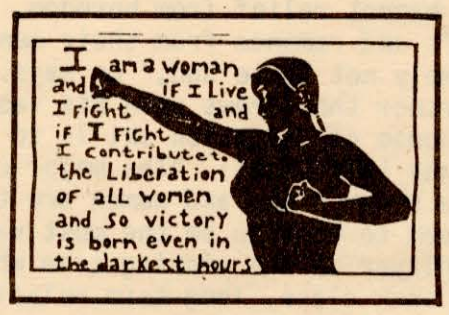
And , on my right, an out-of-province contender.

"Any woman who wants an abortion should be given a razor blade".

Judge Mike Baryluk of the Manitoba provincial court.

To whom would you award the prize, and what should it be?




I am a woman and if I live I Fight and if I Fight I contribute to the Liberation of all women and so victory is born even in the darkest hours

Optimst

Penalties for pregnancy?

Vivian Wong was fired from her job because she was pregnant. In 1979 she complained to the Alberta Human Rights Commission. The case was referred to the Court of Queen's Bench for clarification: was pregnancy a form of sex discrimination? In June of 1983 the Court ruled that sex discrimination in employment does not include discrimination based on pregnancy.

The double bind: we must have babies, but when we do, we are penalized.

The precedent set by the judge means that all women pregnant in this province can be refused employment or fired.

To date, the government has not indicated a willingness to "correct the matter".

Shall we wait for the "grey eminence"?

Optimst

Hythe women greet Russell

Where is Hythe anyway? It's a community of five hundred people, forty miles west of Grande Prairie, and it has a brand new hospital and nursing home.

Hospitals minister Dave Russell went to Hythe for the opening ceremonies on Friday 17th June, and was greeted by a group of citizens supporting the five principles of National Health Care, and asking Russell to reconsider his stand on hospital user fees and extra billing.

Marty WhiteSun, organizer of the demonstration, questions in particular the need for hospital user fees in a province which can afford to provide such expensive facilities in a small community such as Hythe. Grande Prairie hospital was rebuilt at great expense only a few years ago.

Boycott the boys

The Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women has called for a boycott of Canada Safeway stores. MACSW wants the company to eliminate or justify a 48 cent an hour pay differential between food clerks, who are predominately men, and service clerks, who are predominately women.

Perhaps Webspinner readers might like to join and support this action?

First conference on battered women held

By Julie Russell

Sponsored by the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters, this conference, from May 4 to 6, was well attended by shelter staff, volunteers and board members from all over the province. All sessions were filmed and transcripts are available.

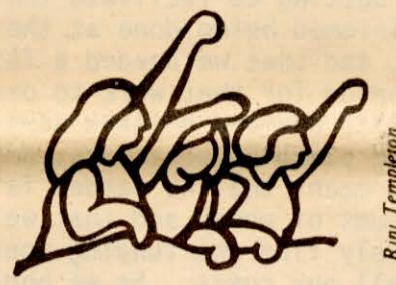
The conference opened with an overview of current statistics on interspousal violence, presented by Calgary social work students. This was followed by presentations from each existing Alberta shelter, outlining history and current work.

The guest speaker was Dr. Lenore Walker, feminist psychologist from Denver, Co. and author of the book The Battered Woman. She outlined her current research on the "battered woman syndrome", including the theory of "learned helplessness". This research indicates a predictable cycle of spousal behaviors in a battering relationship, with implications that women can be taught to map the cycle and thereby help themselves to break it. The learned helplessness theory is important to shelter personnel in terms of developing acceptance when a woman sometimes chooses to go back. The theory also indicates that a woman can "unlearn" that helplessness eventually and take charge of her life.

The second day of the conference began with participants breaking into two groups: one for shelter staff and volunteers to focus on intervention and counselling skills; the other for board members to focus on administrative processes. This was followed by a presentation from Ardelle Dudley, feminist counsellor in Edmonton, about communication barriers within the shelter structures and how those can be broken down using the strengths already present.

The conference wrap-up consisted of participants breaking into smaller groups to formulate recommendations for further action. Those recommendations will be compiled by the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters and printed in a soon-to-be-published newsletter.

Summer school



Rimi Templeton

impressions

"I think there are some really strong, interested women! There's an excellent selection of workshops, accommodations are great, the setting is gorgeous - but almost too relaxed to be political!"
Leisa Robinson,
Niton.

...the timber stands
the hills
the mist of the valley
* * *

...Was that noise the fire alarm or Trish playing the arousing call to take up our porridge and prunes at the ungodly hour of 8:30?
* * *

...Is it true the Cremona bar ran out about Wednesday while Silver Creek Ranch had numerous resources?
* * *

...here--remembering the millenia of our rage and pain and realizing the impossibility of getting all this into these few lines... so trust and know me instead...
* * *

...Well, we remember that wholesome smile, that angelic quality presented by Connie Kaldor. Come on women, practise your Vitamin B-12 smile!
* * *

"A great learning experience! My exposure to the issues hasn't been great, but I've always had the feelings. The resource people are very qualified and informative - and I'm having lots of fun! I can see the energy peaking as each day goes on, and it's only Tuesday!"
Deanna Klychak,
Fort McMurray.

participants

"I came for reinforcement on various issues - and I'm getting it! But we have to set priorities and make choices here just like we do in the world - we can't do it all!"
Sheryl Jackson,
Edmonton

...This week has been a vivid lesson that it is possible to eat 4,000 calories a day and not gain an ounce...must be all this air and green and space and work and play...
* * *

...I dreamed of a squirrel's eye, red bright in the firelight of the quiet log cabin...
* * *

here...Gang, gang, the hail's all

turds!...Keep up with the squirrel
* * *

"It was a really worthwhile focus, but there isn't enough time to get past the content, which I can get anywhere, to organizing strategies."
Connie Kovalenka,
Vancouver.

...Knowing who "just arrived" by hearing about the rabbits... again...

...Smokey and The Bandit who learned how to trust with their little cat hearts
* * *

...women...dancing...in the licking, flickering orange glow of this great rough-stone fireplace...
* * *

"A fine opportunity for us to work and play, struggle, cry, celebrate and relax together - lots of energy and exploration! I've felt pretty accepted."
Debra Carnat,
Calgary.

...Well, they certainly have a lot of rain here don't they?
* *

"I came to get techniques and skills for organizing, because I work with a lot of different groups. There's been a focus on womens' issues here, and I didn't necessarily want that information - but now I want to get involved in women's issues! So I didn't really get what I came for, but it's been good."
Karen Wyllie,
Calgary.

...candle dancing, needing no partners...wanting no "other"
* *

...kittens...Smokey and The Bandit...always delightful presence reminding us of enchanting innocence
* * *

"One of the nicest things about it is not having men around. Learning more - validating feelings I've had all along - meeting all these wonderful people."
Cynthia Best,
Edmonton.

"I can't imagine anywhere I'd rather be right now".
Leslie Keith,
Vermilion.

Being part of creating a newspaper has offered me a new opportunity in creating myself. I literally create myself. I learning and refining this experience. In working here I have discovered a unique trick of intense concentration while keeping my train of thought open to flow--two actions that I have always thought to be mutually exclusive. I have discovered long dormant artistic and creative urges that have risen up to meet the demands of this medium. Webspinner has touched a wellspring of unused and unvalued talents within me. I've used these new aspects of myself as I've spun out into my community.
-Suzn

...trying to touch each other through walls of caution; struggling to know "what is our work?"

...movement--in and out of each other's space, not knowing the "correctness" of our acts but sensing the "rightness" of our trying...
* * *

...Was Mair the smooth-talking, network-spinning woman we all know and love...a slow-walking, web-spinning spider in an earlier life?
* * *

...One way or another these days will lead to changes--and crash diets?
* * *

HOW WE BANKROLLED THE SUMMER SCHOOL

Understanding funding for women

By Julie Anne LeGras
and Marilyn Assheton-Smith

Until feminists find the ultimate answer to our money problems, which is being able to do our work without money we will continually be forced to address money as an issue. We will spend many hours exploring our ambivalent relationship to a tool which we know can work for us, but which we also know is too frequently used against us. We will discuss the politics of money, our suspicions and anxieties around it and and the traps it may draw us into. We will engage in these kind of discussions because we know the rules of those who control money are not our rules and, more often than not, do not fit the ways in which we need to work. Yet, the fact remains, we often need money.

"Sorry buster - fixed income, you know."

The experience of the Summer School Collective in planning a complex, expensive project presents a concrete and many-faceted example of the relation between money and planning. I would like to describe that experience here because the information may assist other women in their organizing work. But I have two other purposes: I want to lessen women's anxiety around money issues when they are project planning and I want to sensitize women who are primarily project participants to their crucial and ideally active role in the planning process.

I will discuss money and planning under three general headings. The first will be budgeting, the second will be external funding sources, and the third will be registration fees as a source of revenue. Under external funding sources I will comment primarily on governments and foundations as possible revenue sources. While discussing registration fees I will address the question of the participant's role both in a financial and a more general way.

Budgeting

Budgeting is intimately connected with planning of any project which requires money. In our case, the planning involved deciding what the collective wanted to do at the summer school, how many days would be needed to do that, what setting would facilitate the summer school process, who might be invited as resource women, how women in Alberta could be made aware of the project and dozens of details.

Each of these involves possible expenditures - so we drew up a budgetary list. Although there is always some flexibility in the dollar size of each item on such a list - whether some travel expenses will be paid to resource women and participants, or whether a residential setting will be used for the project for example - many (not all) of these figures become in fact fixed once some planning decisions have been taken.

In the budgeting process it is essential to separate the "fixed" costs from those expenditures which can be reduced if adequate monies are not raised. If the fixed costs cannot be met by the fund-raising the project must be cancelled or some strategy for dealing with a deficit must be identified. Again, in the planning process, costs may shift from one category to another: once a contract for facilities is signed there may be no flexibility in that category; once resource women or participants have been advised they will receive travel money that shifts into a fixed cost category.

These examples are minimal but they, I think, make the point that planning and budgeting are continuous processes, that as one shifts so does the other until the project is completed. It is in this flux that fund-raising begins. We had decided that we needed a residential setting to faciliate the work we envisioned being done at the summer school, and that we needed a fairly long period for that work to develop. We in fact decided on nine days. Both of these planning decisions, among others, meant that we needed fairly large sums of money and that we could not likely find one funding source to cover all our costs. So we began our search.

External Funding Sources

There are a number of specific elements in the planning and fundraising process which may present excessive difficulties if we are not aware of them. The following are the most obvious ones:

Time - the Collective began planning about a year ago, in the spring of 1982. We thought that year would be ample time to prepare. However we ran into

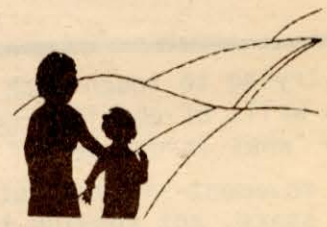
Timelines which were not ours. Potential funding sources do not make decisions the moment they receive the application. They do not deviate from their procedures in order to accomadate the applicant. We had to become familiar with and understand their timelines. Moreover, we had to develop a

List of potential funding sources - this meant discussion with the collective to document all the funding sources we knew. It also meant talking to other women, learning what sources had been used for other women's events, and brainstorming about governmental departments and other institutions which "just might" cover the cost of some part of the summer school. Our short list included slightly over a dozen possible source of funds. Initial discussion and negotiations led to the drafting and submission of

Funding proposals which had to nail down as precisely as possible that part of the project which was of relevance to the potential funder and which showed the estimated cost of that component separated out from the total budget. As we prepared the first round of proposals we also realized the connections between Predictability and contingency plans - we could not, for example, submit all our proposals at once. If two requests for funds which were both earmarked for the same part of the summer school were approved, what would we do? We felt our image as responsible women was at stake. But even just landing up with too much money was a problem for us. Funding bodies claim return of such monies create problems for them, often costing them more than the monies returned. Planners could be left with having to turn their creativity to finding acceptable ways of spending their "excess" funds to present a final, balanced, statement. For an ad hoc collective, that is one which would have no existance after completion of the project, this presents a greater problem than it would have for a continuing organization. Meanwhile, some granting agencies yielded less than requested, and others turned us down or took ages to process applications, issuing no guarentees. That meant more scouting, more dances and more hoops to achieve some modicum of financial security.

To add to the problems, virtually all funding sources approached had different processing procedures, of varying length and complexity. We eliminated two provincial government branches as their mandate was too narrow, their administrative structures too restrictive, and the potential maximum grants a mere drop in the bucket. The prospect of a small chance of success, and small grants if approved at all, did not warrant our energy. We also eliminated one private foundation from our list as our content was so different from their purpose that we could not find a match. We were, of course, not prepared to compromise our purposes for the sake of access to funds.

In total, we submitted ten grant applications. Numerous telephone calls and trips and meetings followed. At the time of writing, while the Summer School is in full swing, our financial status looks reasonably healthy, but there is still some risk. One federal source, although supportive in principle, much to their embarassment had to inform us that they had run dry. Four federal applications were successful, with two of those made to the same department. Three of these brought in all or almost all of the amount requested, and one was halved. Two cheques are in, one is allegedly in the mail, and for the fourth we have only verbal confirmation. The provincial application is still being considered along with applications from other groups: priorities are being sorted out. Two of the applications



to private foundations were turned down and two were successful, although one was approved for only one-fifth of the requested amount. The stated reason was that the Summer School focus on organizing was not in line with the purpose of the foundation. There was, however, some recognition of the fact that much of the content of our workshops and women's organizing in general had everything to do with the foundation's purposes.

It was also clear that few funding bodies could deal with the project in its totality. What to us was indisputably a whole, integrated project, with themes, scheduled workshops, spontaneous discussions, work, and connections intimately woven together over nine days, had to be torn apart for those funding sources which are set up to deal with specific content. A vision had to be reduced to defineable technical compartments...a painfu process of picking apart a whole, juggling the pieces to get the money, and glueing it back together. The reality has come quite close to the vision, but deeper analysis may reveal the glued cracks.

The ultimate nightmare, of course, was the possibility of having to cancel the whole Summer School, last minute, knowing the resource women had already invested time and energy, that many women who planned on coming had made special arrangements, and that all of us would be disappointed to say the least. Much more difficult, at least in practice, was the possibility of cutting our content, thus reducing our expenditures. The question was how to go about that when a project is an integrated whole. How were we to decide which component was more important than another, that one resource woman was more important than another; what to save and what to drop? Fortunately, we did not have to face the agony of choosing between lobotomy, hysterectomy, mastectomy, or other unwanted surgical excisions.

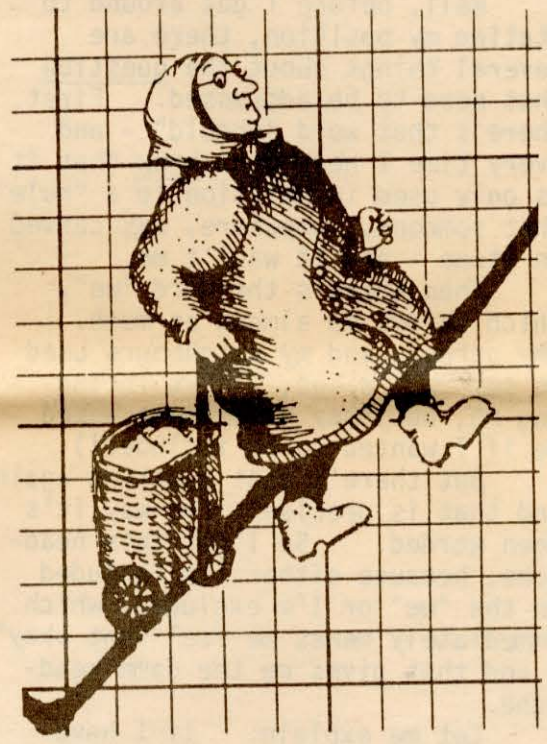
If we had not known it before, we know it now: the institutional mills run incredibly slowly, and virtually always more slowly than organizers can afford if we aim for total financial security.

There is little that can be done, on short notice, about influencing the speed of decision-making of institutionalized funding sources. The more time we build into the planning process the less risk we run of ending up with a deficit budget. That is one reality. Another is that these same funding sources operate on annual budgets and cannot make decisions about the allocation of funds prior to the start of their fiscal year or even very early in that year. It is reasonable to assume that any application made in a current year for the next year will not be processed formally until the next fiscal year has started. On the other side of the coin is the simple fact that few of us are in a position to work on one large project for more than a year, with the demands on us arising from jobs, housework, families, and a barrage of issues which require women's energy. Women's reality and institutionalized reality don't fit. The potential for financial risk and insecurity remains, as do the trade-offs which result from institutional requirements.

Registration fees

Although registration fees are seldom a major source of revenue in women's work, the fees and the whole process of registration play a critical role in the funding. The initial planning decisions include what women are likely to attend, what would be a reasonable fee to expect from the, and how do we address the well-recognized fact that many women cannot pay the fee no matter how low. It is well known that individual fees seldom approach the actual cost of any conference or event - but making a correct judgment about what fees women can/will pay is crucial to actually having women participate. The obvious fact known to all of us is no participants, no event.

Feepaying registrants then contribute in two or three ways to the funding of an event such as the summer school.



Secondly these fees assure funding bodies that the participants are willing to make a personal financial contribution to the event. In this economic system that is equated with responsibility, committment, interest: if the participants will pay for at least a part of the activity they must really want it. We may well know that many women who cannot pay equally "want" the experience, but at least some paid fees reassure funding bodies about our motivations.

Finally, the fact of registrants, is evidence to funding bodies that "some one" will definitely come to the planned event. Planners are often asked by funding bodies - how many registrants do you now have? It is difficult to answer when you know from the grapevine that many women will come but few formal registrations are in.

All of these imply that the collective needed as much preregistration as possible and we did what we could to ensure women would register early. We realized setting aside time for a nine day event would involve women in fairly long-term planning around families, jobs, and other responsibilities. We advertised for over half a year to ensure that interested women could do that planning. We decided on a preregistration time line of a little over a month prior to the start of the Summer School, thinking that we would receive enough registrations by then to get a more accurate handle on our fee revenue and on the interest women would have.

What happened, however, was that the number of registrations received in early May was dangerously small. At the same time, there were all sorts of indications that the interest was much larger and that many women were still considering coming: they simply had not gotten around to sending in their registration form. We had a Collective meeting, reviewed the budget, reviewed the risks of the combination of outstanding grant applications and low actual registration, and decided to extend the registration deadline to the end of May. We got more registrations in, and another grant was approved verbally. By the end of May the stated interest in attending the Summer School and the financial prospects were borderline. Our final decision was to go ahead, realizing that there was a good chance of having at least one other grant approved and of receiving still more registrations. And here we are: the Summer School vision is reality.

The fees themselves, no matter how small, are important for they are funds not tied to particular activities: they fill the gaps left by the incredibly mixed bag of funding agencies discussed above.

It is apparent that the relationship between the finances of a project and the participants in the event is of a collective and political nature. Organizers must recognize that not all women will be able to meet registration deadlines, and that many of the activities of the organizers make that deadline meeting easier or more difficult. But the collective and political process includes the participants too, for they can become active in the planning of a successful event.

It seems to me there are a number of ways in which participants can become active. They can, early in the planning stage, react both to proposed content and proposed costs: they can say they (and perhaps other women they talk to) wil be able to attend under certain

continued on p. 17

BROOMHILDA

I WISH SOME PEOPLE WEREN'T SO GREEDY!
ROSSELL MYERS
THE 'EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF' ATTITUDE ISN'T VERY NICE.
I AGREE!
CLOUT
BUT EVERY WOMAN FOR HERSELF IS ANOTHER MATTER ENTIRELY!
SLURP

Smoke screen

(exerpted from a letter in Flagrant,Spring 1983. The letter links our traditional concept of "disability" to the disability of allergies, particularly to cigarette smoke.)

My allergic reaction to smoke is to feel my throat, nose and eyes get constricted. I get an instant headache, feel alienated and depressed. This continues for a couple of days after I have been exposed to smoke. If I want to go out on a Saturday night, I have to look at my week for what I have to be able to function for, and then make my decision about whether or not it's worth it to me.

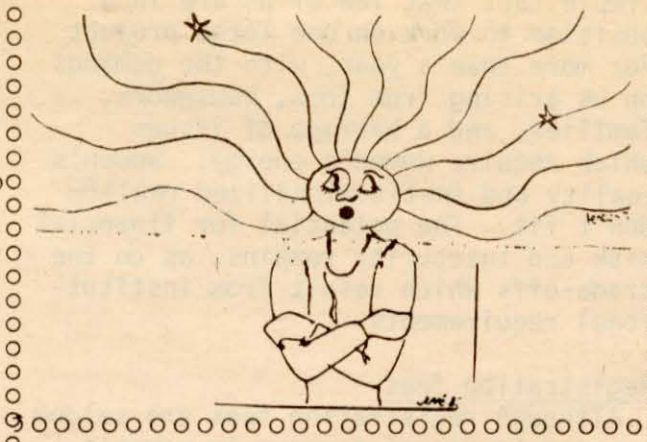
There are a lot of women who can't tolerate smoke because of the allergic reaction they experience. It would make things a lot easier for us if women would take our disabilities seriously. It's not, as I've been told, that we're so into being "pure, backwoods, hippie types", for us it's a choice between being allowed to be part of an event or meeting or leaving early (and not coming the next time).

It would be great if women who smoked could step outside when they want to smoke and if they could take a few smokers with them. It may seem a bit bizarre at first, when "everyone else" is still inside, puffing their hearts out. But every cigarette makes a difference. And it makes a difference to smokers when it's a smoker saying "let's go outside to light up". My smoking friends do it for me, and although they meet a lot of resistance, they think it's worth it because they want women with disabilities to be able to be comfortable.

Let's make an agreement to have no smoking at public events, so we can all breathe the air we share.

Often, we can dismiss a woman (or ourselves) when she is always sick with "minor complaints", is spaced out, is too tired to do what we expect of her all the time, is an alcoholic, is "crazy", seems lazy, is always depressed, flies off the handle a lot, is too intense, is too angry about what others think is not that big an issue, constantly has the 'flu or a cold, is manic/depressive, just doesn't cope well with her life, etc.etc....

She (you) may have allergies, and not know about it. Instead it's easy to feel that everyone else functions OK, so what's the matter with her? If you don't have information that says differently, it's easy to think it's an individual problem with an individual solution.



The "man thing"

By Marilyn Guille

I am writing this as part of a healing process. You see, I have this headache, and writing is often therapeutic for me. Anyway, I have this headache, and I seem to have had it for almost two days now, which roughly corresponds to the length of time I have been in debate with several women about the "man" thing.

The question is: should we, or should we not, include men in our work?

Well, before I get around to stating my position, there are several things about the question that need to be addressed. First. there's that word "should" - and every time I hear it I know that it is only used in relation to a "rule" that someone, somewhere, has carved in stone - and it wasn't me.

Then there's the word "we", which throws me almost as much. (My parents and my neighbours used to say "we" a lot, always including me, but they never once asked me if I wanted to be included!)

But there's that question again and that is precisely the way it's been worded. So I get this headache, because either I'm included in the "we" or I'm excluded, which immediately makes me feel "not okay" - and that gives me the damn headache.

Let me explain. If I have learned anything in this adult life, I have learned to trust myself, and as a result, I know when I can work with men, and when not, and which men, for what reasons and for how long. And I refuse to believe that "all men are potential rapists" and that we can't trust any of them, ever, and that there's no hope.

Should we include men?

I have lots of hope. And I know where I get most of my support - from women. The rest of it comes from my husband. (I use that word purposely, rather than partner, friend, man - because I sometimes get the feeling that it sounds like a dirty word to some, and I want to decriminalize it!) And he has picked me up and encouraged me to get back into the struggle when I'm despairing, at least as often as women have.

I have been through nearly six years of pain and soul-searching in these marriages - the one to a man and the one to a movement - and I have chosen to stay committed to both. I don't believe they need be mutually exclusive.

Labels up in smoke

By Mair

There are two kinds of people in the world - those who think there are two kinds of people in the world and those who do not.

I guess I belong to the latter, and particularly around the smoking issue.

I've never had a cigarette in my mouth - but I am not a non-smoker. I won't accept that label, and I do not appreciate being labelled thus.

I have at times felt ripped off by both smokers and non-smokers, and I particularly feel this when both groups disrupt my working and social setting with their ongoing war. By now there is a lot of guilt and anger around this issue, and I don't want to be part of it. Please don't insis that I have to be.

To smoke or not to smoke - Is that really the question?

Please don't, for instance, ask me why I am sitting with the "smokers". These are not smokers, these are my friends, the people I work with, the people whose energy I want to share. It's too bad that they can't be sharing space with my other friends, the "non-smokers".

Please don't ask me to put limits on my friends' behaviour in my house or my car.

Please don't disrupt our meetings and workshops by a constant stream of people going to "stand by the door". It never works anyway, because they're so interested in what's going on that they sneak back in, and then the guilt and anger begin again. Please, "smokers", don't for the sake of a quiet life agree to some format you know you're not going to stick to. If you are angry that someone else wants to curtail your freedom, say so, and really debate the issue until a practical workable solution can be reached. Meet half an hour early to do this, or however long it needs, so that I and people like me can come when it's over, and get on with the business of the meeting.

Yes, I know I'll shorten my life by being around those nasty waste products. That doesn't thrill me, but I believe I'll shorten my life more by being around the bickering. Besides, I already blew it for longevity: the women's movement is causing me much stress, which is what's really going to kill me, but I'm hooked for life.

Ending the Silence workshops comprise most of the activity

DEBRA LEWIS AT CONFERENCE

Although the May 27-29 Ending the Silence conference in Edmonton included two excellent keynote speakers, the bulk of the three-day conference was made up of a wide variety of workshops facilitated by women from around Alberta.

About 300 women attended the conference whose aim was to discuss violence against women from a grassroots, practical perspective rather than in a doctrinaire way. Women had 45 workshops to choose from. The general categories of workshops were: basic information; theoretical questions and institutional violence; health and related issues; reclaiming power; psychological questions; lesbian and feminist issues; and, life and art.

This issue of Webspinner focuses on the information shared by the keynote speakers, Debra Lewis and Kate Millett. One of the main reasons for this is that their presentations are more easily translated to the printed medium. The nature of the discussion and work done in the workshops would be more clearly conveyed in other ways. With this in mind, we remind readers that the conference committee is in the process of putting together a publication of the taped proceedings of the workshops. Watch future issues of Webspinner for more details as these proceedings become available.

Collage of violence against women

By Meaghan Dean.

One of the keynote speakers at the Ending the Silence Conference in Edmonton was Debra Lewis of Vancouver. Co-author of Rape: The Price of Coercive Sexuality, Ms. Lewis talked about the issue of violence against women in Canada and what she called the "collage" of issues that comprise it. The three main pieces of this collage she described in detail were rape, battery and pornography. The following are excerpts from her talk.

NEW SEXUAL ASSAULT LAW

Dropping attempts at legal reform altogether is not necessarily the only route to go, but unless we understand "the whys, hows and whats of reform we run the risk of being trapped by it and the trap is at least partly of our own making." With this Lewis proceeded to describe the lengthy history behind the recent changes in the sexual assault legislation - changes which, because we fell into the trap, are in her estimation more of a "false step forward".

Work toward changing the legislation began in the early to mid Seventies, primarily through the efforts of the rape centres in Toronto and Vancouver. This work not only provided the basic research for Rape: The Price of Coercive Sexuality, but a wealth of research whose basis was women's experience of rape. It included the stories of women, more examination of how women are treated by the criminal justice system and a look at the history of rape. "It became clear that while women experience rape as an act of violence, a male-defined society does not"- a realization that around 1973-1975 was still a comparatively "startling" one. In those early days the difference between women's and society's experience of rape was emphasized over and over again. One of the illustrations lay in the range of rape jokes doing the rounds in the mid-Seventies. "Only later did I realize that these jokes were an insidious way of confusing our reality, of ignoring our fear and of reminding us of the ever-present potential of violence from men."

It was around 1974-75 that women started to use the term "sexual assault". With this arose what was to become the long debate over whether this change in terminology was really an advance. To insist that rape is a more accurate and meaningful description is to ignore the assault and to avoid dealing with the very real distortion and destruction of both terms. What the debate also did was "impose a 1980s consciousness on a 1970s dilemma".

We now know that there are problems with dealing with sexual violence as one kind of assault. It ignores the fact that sexual violence is not only an act of physical aggression of one human on another, but also is a "very specific kind of

power and control that men use against women". However, retreating to the concept of rape alone does not make for a solution either. It forgets just how revolutionary the concept of rape and sexual assault as a wanton act was just 10 years ago. "The problem of the debate over sexual assault and rape was not that it happened but how it happened".

It was around 1979 and 1980 that the concept of sexual assault was really challenged. Changing rape to sexual assault would only serve to desexualize the offence. It also needs to be based on the recognition that while sexual violence is assault, it is also a very particular kind of act embedded in the power relationships of a patriarchal society. For example, the issue of consent arises in sexual assault that just is not there for any other form of assault. This is because we live in a society that actively encourages the idea that women enjoy or provoke violence or, at the very least, the violence is irrelevant. "We love it, even though we are screaming, crying or even saying 'no'."

"Reform became not only a debate but a polarized split within the movement itself - characterized as support for the rape or the sexual assault position." Those working in grassroots rape crisis centres were alienated from the discussion entirely. The effect of all this was that we focussed on the difference between the two positions. The issue became whether those who adopted one position would be able to stop the other. To Lewis's knowledge there were only two concerted attempts to focus on common ground. The result was that the government capitalized on our divisions and introduced a law which superficially adopted the recommendations we had made over the previous eight years.

Women who had previously worked separately did get together and found there was a common position they could agree on. In the Spring of 1982 this group produced six points which it felt had to be agreed to by government in order for the women to support the proposed law. Three of those points were:

- the degree of sexual violence and the degree of overt violence must be recognized in how the law is structured. In other words, it must be clear that bum-pinching is not the same as rape.
- the past sexual history of the complainant must be irrelevant

" . . . they took that experience, twisted it to conform to a set of legal values that are sexist in their very essence, and fed it back to us as a great advance for women."

in all circumstances. While the new law says past history will almost always be irrelevant, "there are several loopholes big enough to drive a truck through".

-at the very least, the defence of honest belief must be based on reasonable grounds. Given the beliefs about women in a patriarchal society, this defence really must not be allowed under any circumstances.

The six points effort proved to be "too little, too late". "Our own disarray, our own polarization allowed government to institute a law which could be proclaimed as a real change. In fact it does little to challenge the real nature of sexual violence. They did not write into the law our knowledge of women's experience. Instead, they took that experience, twisted it to conform to a set of legal values that are sexist in their very essence and fed it back to us as a great advance for women. In doing so they preyed upon our desperation and tried to make us believe that some advance was better than no advance at all. But in the end a false step forward may well turn out to be two steps back."

We now have a new law and little more understanding of rape. The reality for women is the same: a woman who has been sexually assaulted is not confident of increased protection by it; women working in rape crisis centres know sexual violence continues unchanged; women reading newspapers know that judges entrusted to uphold the law believe that women who don't act according to the "rules" can expect to be raped.

We tried to challenge history but as we worked we often lost track of our own perspective and got divided among ourselves. There are lessons to be learned from this:

-be much more aware of the interest of the state in appearing to be allowing more while maintaining the status quo;

-get access to government information sooner;

-more fundamentally, "we must be clearer about the relative importance of the law and its ability to pretend to change while in fact doing very little. Look at the law as only one part of our strategy and refuse to accept changes that do not exactly fit into our goals. This means we must pay much more attention to involving all of us in the debate, wherever we work, so we can't allow people to be picked off one by one and made into experts." We must find ways of operating that are consistent and allow us to find our common ground.

BATTERING

When Lewis started working more intensely with this issue she had "a bit more experience under my belt" from having worked on rape. "I no longer lived under the illusion that the society in which we live will offer us safety, independence or protection simply because we expose the dangers and the injustices under which we live ...This society simply cannot sustain itself in its present form unless it is, quite literally, on the backs of women." This realization made it easier to be clear on what was to be done and when and how to compromise. "We found that the most effective way to keep our work honest was to listen to the words of women ourselves; to reinforce our own subjective view of the world and to make no compromise that might challenge the validity of that view."

"Sexual violence is the bottom line that keeps all of us in our place. Battered women are in the most direct line of attack."

Sexual violence is the bottom line that keeps all of us in our place. "Battered women are in the most direct line of attack. Virtually every aspect of their lives is controlled by a husband who cannot and will not accept that women have even some right to autonomy." They are controlled economically, sexually, emotionally - and are controlled through their children. "And this control does not stop within the battered woman's four walls - it is there for all of us all the time. The results of this are absolutely fundamental to our understanding of sexual violence. It means that this violence is not just a symptom or a corollary of sexism. It's at the core. It's the heart of patriarchy which allows the body to live and thrive. What this of course means is that men, either individually or as a group, act as the police of the patriarchy." This fact gives the oppression of women a particularly horrifying shape. "Those who are entrusted with society's goal of keeping us in line are sometimes among the very people we care about and who are supposed to care about us. They are friends, our lovers, our sons. And whether or not they use the ultimate weapon of violence themselves, all men gain benefits from the terror of women."

The recognition of this fundamental all-pervasive existence of sexual violence has far-reaching and practical ramifications in our work as women and for our desire for change. "It means that whatever our life choices have been we can never define a battered woman as 'other'. We are all placed somewhere on that continuum of violence. It also means that the ambivalence we hear from battered women makes sense. It sometimes seems amazing that a woman can describe a brutal beating in one breath and in the next say 'I love him'. But we know that what battered women want is the parts of

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"It means that whatever our life choices have been we can never define a battered women as 'other'. We are all placed somewhere on that continuum of violence."

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their husbands that are not violent - they love the good times and hate the violence. They live with the simple and understandable hope that the beating will stop. So the fear and the anger and the love and the hope that women express for their partners is not...masochistic or an acceptance of the victimization. It's rational. It's a reflection too of the same emotions all of us feel for the society we live in and for many of the men in it. And we have to recognize that ambivalence in ourselves. If we don't, we can never close the gap between ourselves and the battered women who are on the front lines."

PORNOGRAPHY

The third part of this collage is in many ways "a tale of madness". "The setting is a society with a pornographic mentality that is so entrenched that it can only be described as insane."

It was around 1978 that Lewis first started working on and looking at this issue. In the last two or three years it has become a central issue. "We spent a lot of time in those years developing the reasonable documented arguments to prove that pornography is harmful and that it has to be stopped. Certainly we needed those arguments that research and document those connections, but ultimately it is not enough either to maintain our own real view of the meaning of pornography for women or to sustain what I know is going to be a long battle. Since this society needs and thrives upon violence against us, there will simply never be enough evidence to convince it that the damage done to us is greater than the need of the culture to maintain us in a state of terror.

Lewis saw this clearly several months ago when, after the bombings of Red Hot Video in Vancouver, she was asked to appear on radio and TV talk shows to "debate with civil libertarians on the issue of censorship". She gave all the arguments we know to be true and only "got more convinced that our

fear and anger was getting lost in the phoney debate". In one of these debates one slick debater argued that "maybe we might control pornography if it can be shown conclusively that it causes harm to women". She proceeded to "blind him" with information about all the studies that have shown strong connections and pointed out that any of us who have dealt with battered women know that pornography is used against us in real and direct ways. His glib response was that because battered women have other problems in their relationships it was really impossible to say if pornography was the cause of it or not.

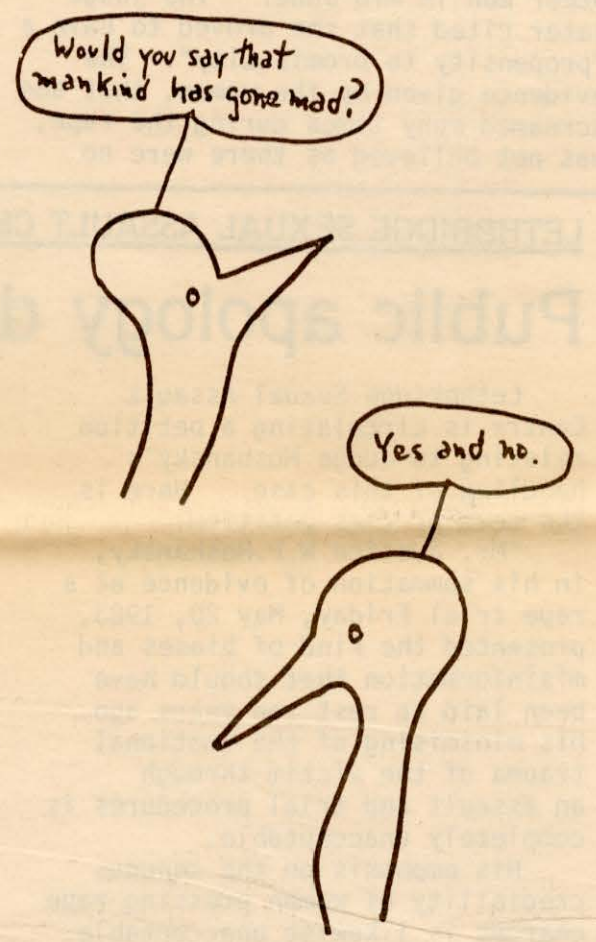
"With that one response he wiped away the very real pain we experience. The issue for him was censorship - pure and simple." Yes, he conceded that some limits might be necessary *if actual damage resulted* but "he was absolutely unwilling to accept women's descriptions of damage as sufficient proof. All these debates took place in terms of what the people behind the cameras considered to be the important issue. In the same way that we lost our own reality in the debates on rape legislation, we are also in danger of fighting the issue of pornography in terms defined by others.

Lewis realized she was no longer willing to take part in yet another reasoned debate. She didn't want to argue over whether there was enough evidence to prove that pornography was destructive or engage in a discussion of pornography in the abstract. She wanted to use the time to force people to see what is in pornography and, most importantly, to relay the words of women - their response to it. She read descriptions - of what Red Hot Video provides, the so-called soft-core porn, of what is around in media every day. She told stories of women who had pornography used against them - those forced to have sex with animals, beaten because they could not imitate the pictures, ridiculed because they could not provide a real version of the fantasy pornography inspires.

"It is really hard . . . but it has to be done to convince women and men as well to look at what is happening and to remind ourselves why this issue is so critical to our future."

It is really hard to do publicly "but it has to be done to convince women and men as well to look at what is happening and to remind ourselves...why this issue is so critical to our future. Furthermore, we need to see that the pornographic mentality is so deep and so central to our culture that no one solution will stop it."

It was at this point she hit bottom in her 10 years of working on women's issues. But two important recognitions came from what she sees as "a critical plunge into madness". One was at the personal level and the second the realization of the true depth and nature of the insane society and sexist culture in which we live. It was in the personal recognition that "I realized the meaning of the despair, the hopelessness, the almost suicidal thoughts that were making me feel virtually immobilized. They were more than fear and anger - though fear and anger were certainly there - there were also signs of grief. An overwhelming grief for a society so bent on destruction of women, so determined to



teach its men to carry out that destruction that it can only be seen as mass insanity." Around this time she read a speech by Andrea Dworkin "that helped me name that process of madness":

"For myself, pornography has defeated me in a way that, at least so far, life has not...(Despite) the difficulties I've had in my life, I've always wanted to find a way to go on, even if I didn't know how - to live through one more day, to learn one more thing, to take one more walk, to read one more book, to write one more paragraph, to see one more friend, to love one more time. When I read or see pornography I want everything to stop. Why, I ask, are they so damn cruel and so damn proud of it? Sometimes a detail drives me mad. "There is a series of photographs...a woman slicing her breasts with a knife, smearing her own blood on her own body, sticking a sword up her own vagina and she's smiling - and it's the smile that drives

me mad. There is a record album plastered all over a display window. The picture is a profile of a woman's thigh. Her crotch is suggested because we know it is there, not because it is shown. The title of the album is "Fuck me to Death, and it's the use of the first person that drives me mad. Fuck me to death - the arrogance, the coldblooded arrogance. And how can it go on like this...senseless, entirely brutal. Again, day after day, year after year. The images and ideas and values pouring out packaged bought and sold promoted...enduring on and on and no-one stops it and our darling boy intellectuals defend it and elegant radical lawyers argue for it and men of every sort cannot and will not live without it. And life which means everything to me becomes meaningless because these celebrations of cruelty destroy my very capacity to feel and to care and to hope. I hate the pornographers most of all for depriving me of hope."

Lewis's "personal part of this struggle ends with the grief...But it also ends with the understanding that grief comes with the understanding of all that is going on - it's the stripping away of all the facade. Once we allow ourselves to grieve we no longer need false hope. We no longer need to compromise our reality. We decide we do not want to fight for society as it exists, but for a new one based on our own view of the world. I continue to try to separate the facade from the reality and it's a very scary thing to do..."

SHE CRIED RAPE BECAUSE SHE DIDN'T CLIMAX

Lethbridge judge peddles sexist lies

By Suzn Morgan.

I've been wondering lately if our legal system will ever be able to get beyond judging women by male moralistic standards. The use of these moralistic values is continuously placing responsibility and blame for sexual assault back on the woman. A recent Lethbridge court case is an example.

On August 13, 1982, a 21-year-old Leduc man, William Grant Irwin, using an assumed name, registered for one day in a Lethbridge hotel. Near midnight, he was seen by local police "watching intently a young woman using a hotel pay phone". He was then seen to leave the building.

At the same time, a young woman, a frequenter of this hotel, phoned a friend from the hotel for a ride home. Her friend was already asleep so she decided to chance the 15 minute walk home. As she walked, she was grabbed and dragged onto a golf-course nearby and raped twice. Her assailant then let her go under threat not to tell.

She ran to a nearby house where she was let in crying hysterically. She fell to the floor, vomited and curled into a ball. The police were called and took her to a local hospital where she was examined and found to be physically okay though she had some small bruises. The doctor later testified she seemed only "mildly" upset as all she did was cry a bit. The next day she went for help to the local Sexual Assault Centre.

On May 20,1983 Judge V.P.Moshansky handed down a "not guilty" verdict after considering the accused's evidence and also indicating many of the woman's actions worked against her. He also criticised the Lethbridge Sexual Assault Centre for "coaching" the woman.

The accused testified he intercepted the woman outside the hotel and that they walked and talked together for a while. He said he offered to smoke a joint with her so they went on onto the golf course where they petted and necked. She then took off her panties and he had sexual intercourse with her, he stated. She began to cry and he surmised it was because she had not climaxed so he sat on her and put his penis in her mouth. She did not seem terribly interested, he said, so they got dressed. She then told him to leave her alone so he replied "Fine, you fucking whore". He said he then walked back to the hotel and went to bed.

The woman's actions that the judge felt worked against her in this case appear to be of a "moral" nature. He indicated that she was married with two children and that she had chosen to go to a bar without her husband. During the in camera evidence discovery the woman acknowledged that she had had sexual intercourse with another man in mid June. The judge later cited that she proved to have a "propensity to promiscuity". The evidence given by the woman, that she screamed many times during the rape, was not believed as there were no corroborating witnesses. This seems very similar to the philosophical question: "If a tree falls in the forest and no-one hears it - does it make a sound?"

Judge Moshansky stated he had doubts about the woman's motive for laying charges. Further, he stated he was very concerned about convicting an accused on only the testimony of the victim. The accused man appeared to him to be a credible witness as he was calm and clear. The woman was judged to be not a credible witness as she was "frequently sobbing and in tears for no discernible reason".

That this case is a travesty of justice is clear. The judge was working under precedents set by the old rape laws. Is there much hope that judgements like this will be changed by the new sexual assault laws? The words and intent seem to be getting away from judging women under moralistic standards. I plan to reserve my judgement until I see results, not good intentions.

LETHBRIDGE SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE

Public apology demanded

Lethbridge Sexual Assault Centre is circulating a petition relating to Judge Moshansky's handling of this case. Here is the text of that petition.

"Mr. Justice W.P.Moshansky, in his summation of evidence at a rape trial Friday, May 20, 1983, presented the kind of biases and misinformation that should have been laid to rest ten years ago. His minimising of the emotional trauma of the victim through an assault and trial procedures is completely unacceptable.

His emphasis on the tenuous credibility of women pressing rape charges is likewise unacceptable.

His comment that a support service like the Lethbridge Sexual Assault Centre is unnecessary has been contradicted by the fact that the complainant has been hospitalized and is under psychiatric care.

His unfounded charge that the Lethbridge Sexual Assault Centre "coached" the woman on what answers to give is a dangerous slur, the effects of which may prevent other women from seeking the qualified and conscientious support available to them.

We, the undersigned, request a public apology from Mr. Justice W.P.Moshansky, in respect to the above stated concerns."

For more information, or to offer your support, contact
Lethbridge Sexual Assault Centre
#5 740 4 Ave South
Lethbridge, Alberta
T1J 0N9.
Phone 320 7730.

G.P. sets dreadful precedent under new sexual assault law

By Mair

Provincial Court in Grande Prairie, Alberta, is gaining a reputation for precedent-setting cases of interest to women. Judge Dwayne Rowe's decision in the case of K vs K in 1976 was the first in Canada to give full legal custody of a child to her lesbian mother.

In March 1983 Judge Ken Staples handed down another precedent-setting decision; the first in Alberta and maybe in Canada under the new sexual assault legislation. He sentenced Andrew McDonald, who had pleaded guilty to sexual assault causing bodily harm against his estranged wife, to one year imprisonment followed by one year probation.

Andrew McDonald and his wife separated in December 1982, and were in the process of obtaining a divorce. Their five-year-old daughter lived with her mother, and the question of access to her became a bone of contention between McDonald and his wife.

On the evening of February 24th, 1983, McDonald went to the dry cleaners where his wife worked; tried to "kiss and fondle" her, forced her to the back of the place and undressed, attacked and raped her, bruising her

Rapist of exemplary character

leg, torso, neck, back, eyes and face.

When she tried to escape, still naked, he dragged her back and broke her glasses. She screamed for help. A passer-by came to her aid - at which point McDonald left. Police and an ambulance were called, and Mrs. McDonald spent the night in hospital.

Judge Staples in his argument makes some statements which trivialize and divert attention from the nature of this attack. He accepts without question that McDonald's reason for sexually assaulting his wife was the question of access to their daughter. He extrapolates from the fact that McDonald has no previous record, that his employer is prepared to take him back and that lots of his family turned up in court and "spoke highly of him" that he is therefore a man of otherwise exemplary character - the flaw in his character involves some history of violence inflicted upon his wife culminating in the incident in question.

Staples' most serious statement - for those of us who are concerned about the future of sexual assault legislation, was made in relation to the sentence which he gave Mr. Exemplary McDonald. He made a careful distinction between the "physical injuries", which "would result, if in incarceration at all, in a maximum sentence of perhaps six months for a first offender with this man's background", and the sexual aspect of this attack, which by simple arithmetic appears to result in the other six months of imprisonment. Staples states "I am of the view, and I believe it is common ground, that the degree of trauma associated with a sexual attack is affected by the relationship, if any, between the parties. And I think it cannot be said that the trauma suffered by the victim is as great where there has been a past history of lawful sexual relations with the accused as it would be if she were attacked by a stranger". Thus Staples joins the ranks of men throughout history who make the assumption that rape is on the same continuum, albeit at the far end, as courtship, love and consensual sex.

This case is being appealed, and the appeal will be heard in Edmonton, probably this Fall. The Crown is appealing the length of the sentence. I don't have any hope that Staples' sexist attitudes and predjudices will be called from within the judicial system; it is, as usual, up to us to call them.

McDonald was charged with aggravated sexual assault, and by virtue of pleading guilty to the lesser and included charge of sexual assault causing bodily harm earned himself some hefty Brownie points. The gravity of this assault, and of his "one flaw", is thus obscured in the public information. The grapevine knows, however, that this was in fact the fourth such assault in the two months since they separated, and that she at one time wanted to charge him with attempted murder. Plea- bargaining is a well-known legalistic device, and in this case as undoubtedly in many others, it serves to dilute and obscure public awareness of the actual seriousness of violence against women.

There's another factor in the silencing. The case was quite adequately reported by Mary Ann Barr in the Grande Prairie Daily Herald Tribune, but when she tried to file it with Canadian Press it was refused as not being "very important". Therefore news of this precedent-setting case only reached the world outside of Grande Prairie by the aforementioned grape-vine.

The court system, an element of which is the impunity with which judges can bring their predjudices with them to work, is excluding women's experience; malestream media, also subject to predjudice about "important" news, is refusing to give us the information we need to take action in our own lives.

Monitoring projects

It is obvious that we need to be sharing our information about the way rape cases are being tried - particularly those which set precedents under the new law. The Sexual Assault Centres in both Edmonton and Calgary have developed monitoring projects: call, or send newspaper clippings, copies of court transcripts or any other relevant material to:

Judy Waller and Morgan Price:
Sexual Assault Centre
1725 12th Street SW,
Calgary. 244 1353

or

Corine Macdonald
Sexual Assault Centre
#308, 10179 105 St
Edmonton 423 4102.

Communiquelles

EVERY WOMAN'S PLACE

A success story at last

By Christine Kulyk

At last, Edmonton has a thriving women's centre. Every Woman's Place was officially opened on International Women's Day, March 7th, in 1982, and has been going strong for more than one full year.

The centre was the brainchild of a group of Edmonton women who, in early 1981, began making plans to fulfill their dream of starting a women's centre for the city. The initial push for realization of this dream came from members of the Common Woman Books collective. Women who visited the bookstore often expressed the need for a central location where they could become involved in the women's movement locally, keep up-to-date on all the activities and organizations which had sprung up in recent years in the city, and generally have the opportunity to meet and share their energy with other women.

Common Woman Books had been serving this purpose to some extent, but it was clear that more was needed. Members of the collective began meeting with other interested women to define their view of a women's centre. They hoped to raise enough funds to purchase a building large enough to have office space which they could rent to other women's organizations and to individual women, as well as large meeting rooms and space for dances and concerts, and retail outlets such as (of course) Common Woman Books itself. By pooling financial and human resources, the centre would help all the women involved to achieve more, cooperatively. It soon became apparent that the idea of buying a large building was more than they could manage financially. In November of 1981, the 20 women present at an Every Woman's Place (EWP) meeting decided to look for a building to rent.

Ideas plus commitment

They had a few concrete assets already: incorporation as the Edmonton Every Woman's Place Society; almost 100 members; an official logo and T-shirts bearing that logo in bright red and white; and some money in the bank from a benefit dance and supper, to which over 200 people had come to offer their support. They also had a philosophy established for the functioning of their organization and the operation of the future centre: it would be a completely non- hierarchical, "pro-woman" organization, with decisions made collectively by the membership, and memberships open to all women. The centre itself would be open to all women, whether they became members or not.

At the 1981 annual conference of the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee (ASWAC), EWP members presented a workshop describing their organizational strategies and their plans for the centre. From this woekshop, many positive responses were generated, as well as valuable advice and support, and supporters.

In December of 1981,the Every Woman's Place Society signed the lease on a city-owned house in the Oliver area - an older home, slightly run-down, but large and roomy with two floors, in a central location handy to bus routes, and possessing a warm and comfortable atmosphere

continued on next page

which immediately appealed to everyone who walked in. They paid the first month's rent beginning in February 1982, and sent out notices of an Open House to take place early that month, asking people to bring donations of furniture and supplies for the centre. In the mean-time, city work crews did considerable repairs and repainted the interior of the house. By the time the centre was officially opened in March 1982, with another open house and film night as part of Edmonton's IWD celebrations, the house was equipped with furniture, women's art, and the beginnings of a resource library, all donated by supporters of EWP.

effective women

Since then the centre has grown and changed in ways which have been encouraging at times, scary or disheartening at other times. After their initial efforts, which kept EWP open as a drop-in centre 7 days a week (with daytime and evening hours) for several months, many of the women began to drop out of active involvement, and left to pursue other interests. EWP limped through its first summer with activity grinding almost to a halt by summer's end, and a few stolid members hanging on desperately. The public attention they had gained in early months through media releases and feature stories in the local press, and through activities like protesting sexist propaganda and events in the city seemed almost to have been wasted, as many people expressed a belief that the centre had closed down. The problem was that there were not enough women able to staff the centre on a regular basis, and they couldn't afford a telephone answering machine. As a result the phone would ring unanswered for days, until it almost stopped ringing altogether.

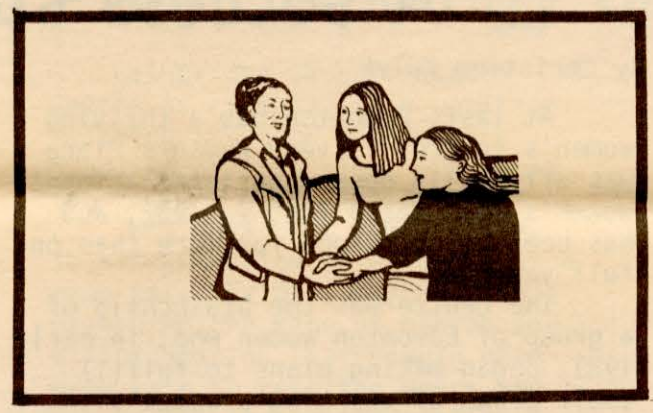
To make matters worse, the centre was fraught with frustrating hassles from the city Bylaw Enforcement Division, who insisted that the block on which the house was situated was not properly zoned for a women's centre - it was zoned for residential use only. After considerable agonizing discussion and research, the EWP members determined that the city's dispute was not really with EWP, but with itself. It was the city's Real Estate Department which had erroneously rented out the property without checking the zoning regulations, so as EWP's landlord it was this department which was actually breaking the law of the other department.

A long struggle ensued, in which EWP members called on all their supporters to help save the centre, by presenting their case first to the Development Appeal Board and then to City Council. Support was phenomenal, with letters pouring in from members and non-members, media coverage, and the assistance of supportive members of City Council, the Oliver area citizen's group, and even a Cabinet Minister.

Finally, a threatened eviction notice from the City was rescinded and the city agreed to re-district the building for use as a women's centre. When the large white wooden sign appeared on the front lawn giving notice of this, the members of EWP knew the battle was more than half over. The actual re-districting was not completed until April of 1983, when the application was unanimously approved by City Council.

Efforts to save the centre, although ultimately successful, caused yet more women to drop out of their active involvement. But the collective battle had given the group some additional strength and confidence in their ability to survive, and they had gained much needed (and positive) public attention and support.

At an emergency meeting in September, 1982, the general membership was called upon to revitalize the flagging activities and use of the centre. The response to this call was sufficient to carry the centre through to the end of its first year, when another emergency meeting in late April of 1983 again brought the membership together to confront the problem of paying the next month's rent - and finding a way to survive financially over the coming months. At this meeting, the group also discussed the role of the centre and of its members, and the need for more involvement and support from the women's community as a whole.



The future now looks much brighter for EWP, and the house seems almost to be sighing with relief - a habit it has undoubtedly picked up from the many women who pass through its doors. The centre is now home for several women's groups: Womonspace, the Alberta Society of Women Against Violence, the Women's Disarmament Campaign, the Ending the Silence conference committee, the Social/Political Action Committee of EWP, the Women's Monthlies discussion group, and the Edmonton Webspinner workshop, to name only a few. Other groups such as Alberta Status of Women Action Committee and Common Woman Books are also using the space for meetings and other activities.

The EWP society itself still holds regular support group sessions (on the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month) at which the needs of the centre and how to meet them are discussed, and the many women involved can share their thoughts and feelings on anything of concern to them. The EWP Women's Resource Centre, a well-stocked library of over 500 books, periodicals, and audiovisual aids is proving to be a valuable source of information for many women. For almost a year, members have been publishing a newsletter which is mailed to many local women's groups and to all members, to inform them about EWP activities and about other local events and issues of concern.

Womyn's space

Have you ever wished for some place to connect, in a relaxed atmosphere, with other women in Calgary? A place to find out what's happening for women in the city? A "women only" place to meet, hold meetings and occasionally party!

If you are interested in supporting and helping to start this project going:
Contact Suzn 246 8755.

EWP has compiled and published a "Women's Resource Directory", listing dozens of local women's groups and social service agencies. The centre also holds monthly pub-nights, coffee house nights, and other activities depending on the interest and work of the members.

Funds for the operation of the centre are acquired solely through donations, membership fees, monthly pledges by members and occasional fund-raising activities. The centre does not receive any government funding for its ongoing operation, although it has obtained some funding from the Secretary of State Women's Program for the establishment of the library. The centre has no paid staff, all the work being done on a volunteer basis by the women who want the centre to survive.

Every Woman's Place is more and more a real centre for the women's movement in Edmonton. As the women at the emergency meeting in April acknowledged, the centre will survive only if all of the women in Edmonton who care about their right to full equality in society support the centre in any way they can. Some are offering organizational support by holding their groups meetings in the centre and contributing to the cost of the centre. Others are helping by becoming active members; keeping the place open for a few hours each week; helping to plan fundraising activities; working on the newsletter or the library; doing maintenance work, or by donating money or supplies.

Today EWP is more alive than ever before. The women who are actively involved, or who use the centre only occasionally, are discovering that it makes finding supportive women much easier. It is also a terrific way to keep the widely spread women's network of contacts and co-operative efforts intact and functional. To the women who put body and soul into keeping it alive, the success of EWP is a well-earned reward, and a sign of the power of women working together. And it's all happening every day (almost - we're still working on it) at 9926 112 St (phone 488 2748), in Edmonton.

You and I are the ones who will help it to keep on happening, by using and supporting the centre so that it will be here for all of us, for a long time to come.

Eroticism and pornography . . .

Photos by Meaghan Dean

By Kate Millett

I am going to talk about Eroticism and Pornography, and the Politics of Violence. I have discussed eroticism and pornography in the Canadian film Not A Love Story in terms of the erotic art I was doing at the time: drawings of free brush stroke nudes ... and not just nudes but vaginas, labias, breasts, nipples, and a great deal of what we laughingly call around the studio, cunts. We took great delight in using the term, because we were women doing a breakthrough on a taboo subject. Within the fine arts, until one artist gave green pubic hair to a red nude at the turn of the century, we really did not have much female genitalia in the arts, except in primitive art. (Of course, we have what we call beaver, but this has a different purpose.)

So we were also creating, in opposition, a kind of erotic art. But when we use a word like cunt, there are a thousand unwanted meanings and associations. We really do feel a certain crudity about that word, or even a sense of hostility - there is something about the way that word is used. Now as a writer and literary historian, I am aware of a million ways of using it. Chaucer, for example, uses it all the time. I am particularly delighted by the Wife of Bath, who bragged about her cunt - spelled 'quente', but we all know what that means. And we know that word from Henry Miller, Nicky Cilent and so on, but here there is cruelty and animosity in the way it is used. If you have ever listened to one man curse another man, this is what he will call him.

I would like you to think about the words that are used for sexual parts and sexual acts, and ask what are we going to do? Are we going to destroy those words, make them taboo so that we can't say them? Or are we going to restore them? Because a word like cunt works great in Chaucer, when the Wife of Bath is proud and not ashamed. That is very different.

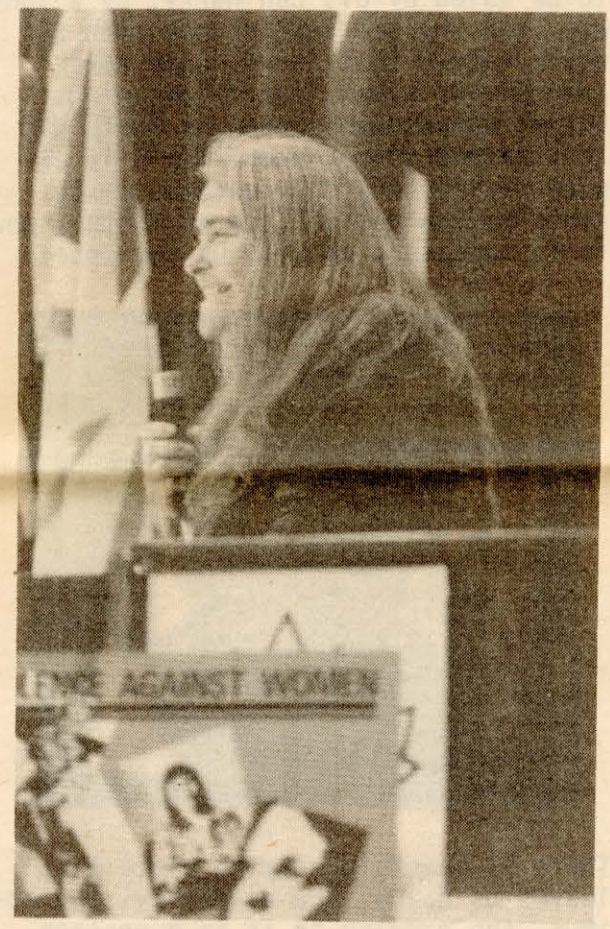
"Nothing and no one is assaulted in eroticism because eroticism is about sexuality itself."

So the discussion I had with the Canadian film-makers centered around the distinction between eroticism and pornography, and how my Japanese brush drawings celebrated women - even the female genitalia. Pornography was a whole different thing. The distinction is important, because from pornography we are going to escalate to the politics of violence, and in eroticism there is no violence. Nothing and no one is assaulted in eroticism because eroticism is about sexuality itself - not sexuality as a metaphor for anger or cruelty or as a substitute.

The erotic is happily sexual, delightedly sensual, without malice, guilt, or shame. This culture, with its history of guilt and repression, and abuse of sexuality by force, rape and mutilation, has been really horrendous. The Japanese punished adultery with crucifixion until the eighteenth century; in the Bible it was stoning, and in the United States until very recently, you could go to prison for adultery.As for homosexuality, the punishments are still more harrowing.

Every institution in our culture has forbidden us to enjoy sex, while enjoining us at the same time to procreate - a dubious duty! It has created the notion of sin just to be sure. It's legal code backs up this repressive manner of raising children, of courtship, and of married life - so it's a great system of taboo.

We tend to think of taboo as just a nice quaint word - but it is an injunction against us. It has a point to it all. There is a political purpose to sexual repression in our culture, which is but one very vicious, fundamental thing: it has condemned sex and sexuality and then it has located both - in the female. She is IT. For this reason she is unclean and the source



of temptation, a suspicious being to be watched over at all cost.

Recently a judge accused a five year old child who was molested of being provocative. And this goes back to the case of Sylvia Likens,which is the subject of The Basement. This is an actual case of a sixteen year old girl who had been imprisoned in a basement, and was found tortured to death. WHY? Well, her guardians had decided she was unclean, in fact, loose - and they wrote upon her body I AM A PROSTITUTE with cigarettes. It seemed to me, the first day I heard about this, that it was an act that changed my life. But it also seemed to make sense in an almost profound fable-like way - as if this girl's treatment was all of our treatment.

But it was so exaggerated, so hideous, that everybody could see how crazy it was: the shame, the modesty, the whole meaning of sexual repression in our culture and the way in which young females who think they are free are finally coerced. Their necks are broken over the issue of chastity - the endless interrogation, judgement, and examination that we are put through over sexuality. This is strange, because in Biology, whatever is wrong about sexuality is pretty well shared.

But in patriarchal cultures, if sex is evil, then it follows that women are evil. So not only are women controlled, but there is the added mental burden of shame, making women docile and passive. In spite of the sexual revolution, or maybe because of it, women live without confidence all their lives.

It also follows, then, that sex is there, in women, to be 'gotten', 'taken' or 'cheated out of' them, blamed on them, or taken by force or violence. But it is something they 'have', it resides in them, and it can be snatched away from them. Men are not sex, we are. They rape, we are raped, and yet the blame is on us. This is all a bit crazy, but there is logic to it if you regard the sexes as two groups, two classes: the female without power, and the male with power - over the world and over the female.This takes us back past recorded prudery, and whatever religious hold remains on our civilization; back to the origins of those systems. In patriarchal religion and repression, all this is still very much in operation. We still live in patriarchy: that is, a system that is more pervasive than any other political or social institution that we know of - male domination more basic than class or race or property. It is less spoken about, less defined and more taken for granted, and it operates through roles, status and temperament. And the class in power, males, will also be trained to be aggressive and grasping - that is, men active and women passive. And this is imagined to be even in the biological make-up of the psyche. All of this is, of course, political, none of it is biological. It has been a successful system for a very long time, and it is still in power.

"Patriarchy . . . like all precedent institutions, when it loses its hold, it has to resort to muscle."

But patriarchy as an institution is up against the wall now - not just now, but in the past 150 years - ever since the Renaissance. It can no longer be as sure as it once was. Like all precedent institutions, when it loses its hold, it has to resort to muscle. One of the central mechanisms for controlling in the patriarchy is through sexuality: through the family, reproduction, and attitudes. Sexuality itself - desire, lust, joy, fornication - whatever form it takes, is all manipulated by the political circumstances of the two groups. No matter how rigorously individuals might try to transcend that state, the image - whether passive or repressive - is not too important. Whether the image is a stripper, a go-go dancer, a proper matron, or Queen Victoria, they are all male codes replacing the image of the human female, a being of convenience, service and rules. If she breaks these, ostracism, abuse, starvation or death follows. She is expected to make her living in this way in one form or another. Or social nothingness - pariah-hood of prostitution. Pariah-hoods are always there in patriarchal history. Coercive sexuality

. . . Kate Millett's topic . . .

is always operating through a pariah class of homosexuals.

In patriarchy, we women do not take sexuality gladly, really, or partake of it according to our own will. Traditionally, we are acted upon - that is the politics of power and powerlessness. It is very difficult, as the founders of the Russian Revolution found out about a month and a half after they thought up their new laws, to enfranchise a new group to have instant divorce or free love or whatever when they don't have any money. You end up with homeless women and children - abandoned.

NEVER FORGET THE ROLE OF MONEY IN MANIPULATION - and of economic independance or the lack of it.

So if eroticism is freedom, a joyous celebration of sexuality, then how do you even get there in patriarchy? If it is freedom rather than slavery, pleasure on the world of the senses, adaptation of experience - you also must remember there is very little eroticism in the world; very few practitioners and examples of it - what then is pornography?

Even if we have subjected ourselves to very little of it, we know right off that pornography isn't fun. It isn't about humor any more than it is about tenderness. It isn't funny - it is about degradation, humiliation, and the infliction of pain - power over another being.

"Eroticism is sex-positive and porn is anti-sex."

IF EROTICISM IS ABOUT SEX, THEN PORNOGRAPHY ISN'T. Eroticism is sex-positive and porn is anti-sex. It is about power and manipulation, about violence and exploitation, about making a fool of someone against their will - but not about sex. The sexual organs when they appear, do not appear as sexual organs but as other things - rods, guns, gashes - objects of conquest and defeat. Porn is a form of warfare - cultural warfare. Andrea Dworkin, in her fine book about porn, analyzed the patterns at great length. The point is made in this picture she describes:

A woman is tied spread-eagle on the hood of a jeep. The caption encourages 'good humor' - 'to go hunting pussy'. We have been passed over as being in captivity, crucified on a machine which is now described as an animal of prey. The slang word 'pussy' is transposed from the domestic cat, which first gave rise to this often affectionate and even funny term. But

here 'pussy' or cunt or vagina or pubic hair or whatever gives rise to the word 'pussy, we don't think of now as a kitten with soft furry hair - but as an animal of prey, to be hunted - wild. And the unseen male driving this jeep, the viewer voyeur, is the hunter inviting the one who looks at the magazine, to join him as the mighty hunter and the lord of creation, the primitive man who hunts with rod and gun (or just his poor wimpy cock - this is another domestic animal that has been transposed.) Now cock and pussy are old-fashioned and have a real charm compared to this picture of this woman tied up on this automobile utterly defenseless - which is deliberately sadistic, cruel and dehumanizing. It isn't naughty, it isn't folk, revelation, humor ... it is absolute dehumanization. There is true animus here, real cruelty. The idea of tying a woman to a machine...this even ouddoes the tales of Little Nell tied to the tracks to be saved by Oil Can Harry, by a long way, too. We are dealing now with an overt hatred that is not only very painful for women, but frightening, scary, unreasonable. How on earth did this hatred arise, when? Isn't it enough that we are only getting sixty cents on the dollar, and so forth - now it is necessary to kill us for sport.

There is something taking place that leaves us dazed. The hostility, the animus, the cruelty in it is a contact with male emotion we have never had to endure before. We are appalled to be hated, and we are appalled that that kind of hatred should furnish entertainment. This is an image in our culture - is that what the sexual revolut- brought us? Are women being tied naked to a car for purposes of rape? What on earth is happening? Is this what we've come to by ending censorship on a taboo? I guess so. We only stifled taboo, we didn't get rid of it. For that, we would have to have a revolution. Since the relationship between the sexes is political, merely changing the degree of repression/reform but not altering it, has resulted not in liberty, but in license. Not in revolution but in counter-revolution, because in many ways that is what we deal with in porn

Porn is a reactionary force because it makes millions of $$$ and involves huge numbers of the population (this is no surprise, most reactionary things do). They are also left alone by government. Don't you think that it is somehow miraculous how porn operates when all other forms of civil liberties are shrinking - when all other forms of authoritarianism are on the rise? Ten years ago would it really have been possible to have porn in

shopping centers in the little mall near our farms - x rated movies and a dirty book store? The neighborhood can't support a bookstore -the last one closed--but it can support this!

There aren't many movies for miles around except x-rated movies and peep shows.You wonder, with New England's conservative, protestant righteousness, how all of this is going on when they have so many churches, so many pastors, so many other prudish, reactionary repressive elements that seem to ignore this. The aldermen,the town councillors, the busybodies - Mrs. Grundys.

I do not advocate the return of censorship in any form. I object to porn and those things that encourage feelings of superiority towards women. I object to things that punish women for their freedom and individuality that they have, through their struggles for liberation, because porn is hate material. Think of porn against women as something similar against Jews or Blacks - unthinkable that people should be tied up, beaten, and murdered in movies - even killed as a form of entertainment! If you started making movies like that about lynches, the holocaust, etc., my God, there would be an uprising. But women are so much less than people, that torturing, mutilating and murdering us is a legitimate industry for entertainment. It is what respectable, middle class bourgeois males of all ages call titilation. Funny, it's even regarded as 'freeing.' And since it has a sadistic and very dehumanizing effect, porn must have an effect on men other than their attitudes towards women. Porn strikes me as a kind of last ditch stand of male chauvinism - more obnoxious and more brutal than any rearguard propaganda than we have ever seen in the past - and it's up front. IT SEEMS THAT WE ARE GETTING NEAR BEDROCK NOW, and that symptom tells us alot about its calloused center. Sex is disguised so much more appealingly when it is in flower or in bloom.

"It took a long time to work towards the core of our oppression, for us to be honest about the nature and brutality of the patriarchy."

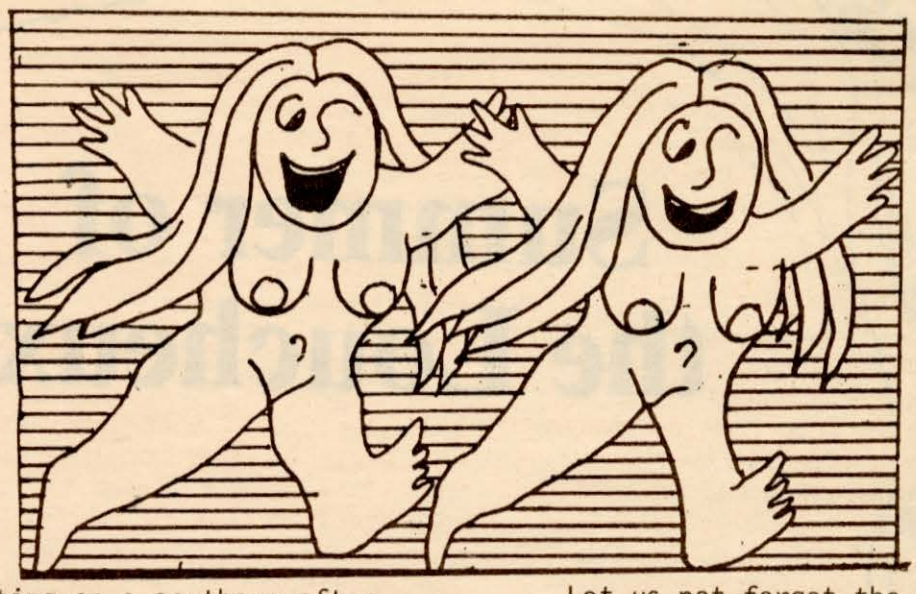
It seems as if there is a withdrawal of consent or agreement now, and the beginning of a real friction. There is little chivalry now to hide the issue, and there is the violence. We didn't used to talk about violence against women; we talked about discrimination. We used to say we weren't paid as much, that we were restricted in our choice of employment and in our opportunities for advancement (and that is as true today as it was then), but we didn't talk about being beaten up

more....

. . . at Ending Silence Conference

or raped - it seemed unsportsmanlike. We were so very eager to be reasonable with a series of statistics to say what everybody already knew - that we were underpaid, discriminated against. It took a long time to work towards the core of our oppression, for us to be honest about the nature of and brutality of the patriarchy. We should have known that all coercive institutions rest on force and violence, therefore kinship, slavery ... they all stem ultimately from violence. It comes to the surface with unemployment, patriotism, defence, war and torture. Now we have confronted it and we are still stunned.

I was very stunned when I was in Iran demonstrating for the last vestiges of women's rights. There were troops of men who were set against us - their job was to kill us, beat us to a pulp. To see them advancing and to know that they really want to kill you - I had never seen such a sense of hatred from the other side. They did not know us, but were acting on bigotry, and the power given to them. At the base of all coercive institutions there is something like that. It is coherent, given patriarchy's use of sex as a force to control women. Then it is the same cruel tortuous illogic that leads to sexual assault - rape. The rape we have all been conditioned to operate our lives around -that is, we must get home, avoid bad streets, ask ourselves what might happen if the car breaks down, etc. All of our lives are circled round by a vulnerability in which it is supposed to be our fault. It is her fault if she gets beaten - she must have provoked him some way or other. And if she stays on - "What are you, a rug or something? And if she stays for her children, or has nowhere else to go, no life, no prospects - 'She probably never had a sense of self.' She wasn't supposed to! Everything is at the victim's door including the violence - even the violence of male entertainment, the porn in humor, in the game of rape - which is cultural. Did you know that there is a video game of 'Rape' now? But most boys learn it far earlier anyway - the group around the schoolstartsmaking remarks about girl's bodies - the appropriation of girl's bodies - a victory for them and a lesson for her. Cruel and heartless



as race-baiting on a southern afternoon. One group of people being set against the other, as a cat plays with a mouse.

Patriarchy is so unpleasant an institution; it has so limited our potentials. Who wants to be locked in the images of masculinity ... or femininity ... a psychic foot-binding for everybody? But that is where we are without eroticism or joy or celebrating any damn thing unless you sneak away - and that's hard to do, because you always gotta sneak back!

It is important, in the middle of this ugly oppression, to remember the image of our own humanity - that of men, the happiness of sexuality, the pleasures of the senses with each other, and the lesbian solution, which is very logical. To hold on to all this, which requires a great deal of compassion, objectivity, as well as a very sturdy sense of humor, and a real taste for appreciation of all those charms, we need eroticism.

Eroticism is indispensable to get rid of patriarchal rejection and its newest ally, porn. Eroticism is a corrective. Can we turn back the clock and reintroduce taboos, censorship, etc? No! Eroticism is the corrective. In a culture ripe wtih violence, real and metaphorical, how much non-violence and wisdom, tolerance and compassion must be brought to bear - love, gentleness for each other and for ourselves - to defend ourselves from violence and its chain reaction, hatred. How much clear-headed determination is necessary!

Let us not forget the institutionalized economic exploitation of women, and the bureaucratic violence of welfare, etc. Just to rectify the abuses of sexuality, we cannot stop short of going the whole way - of creating a revolution and turning patriarchy out - and the world as we know it on its head! Otherwise it gets meaner, we get porn, then patriotism, then defence, then war and the torture - a world utterly devoid of pity, and we are moving toward that right now. We are living in a time of a politics of violence, where torture is a form of entertainment as long as it is fantasy. Where the state militarism, authoritarianism and nuclear activity control our lives, with fears that the planet will blow up. Do you know how much it costs - one more silly set of regulations in our lives - the age of security! Why do we have to get our electricity from something so noxious that it will blow up the whole state ... whatever happened to waterfalls?

The age of nuclear anxiety. Canadians have been coerced into testing missiles. Well, they won't stop there. Europe is just one bad case of hives. Reagan has engineered it so he can have the war in Europe! More and more of our lives are controlled by the state - a series of things are in place that lead towards fascism.

(And Millett goes on to recommend eroticism as our friend, and to supplement eroticism with doses of 'passive frivolity.')

Funding continued

cost and perhaps timing conditions; they can comment on what they would like to achieve at an event like the one proposed (in this case an organizing summer school). Although one such note or letter or verbal comment may not influence the shape of the project, a few will. Such input or feedback need not be lengthy - simply comments, brief notes - all help the organizers to ground their work in the experience and expectations of potential participants.

But, to complement the planning process of the organizers, participants must also plan for an event such as this. They will need to reorganize family and worktime, perhaps set aside holiday time, and do considerable preparations. Women of course know this, but they often forget that they need to include the organizers' needs in their own planning; they need to set dates for pre-registration on their calender along with dates for making arrangements to take time off work or dates to plan the family support system while they are gone.

Our experience has shown that we as women can excercise collective control to make a desired event happen - despite difficulties with institutionalized funding sources. The above ways for participants to involve themselves in the organizing process are the support we can give to each other, actively and deliberately. It is one form of working together and of strengthening each other in the women's movement.

GLORIA STEINEM COMING TO ALBERTA

Tammy Donovan 284-7225

Gloria Steinem will be among the keynote speakers at a major three-day conference at Banff in October.

Sponsored by the women of the University of Calgary Faculty of Law, the conference is entitled Women, Law and the Economy. It will be held Oct. 13-15.

An American feminist and activist for many years, Steinem is one of the editors of Ms. Magazine.

Anyone interested in the conference can get more details in the August issue of Webspinner or contact Catherine Brown at 284-7326.

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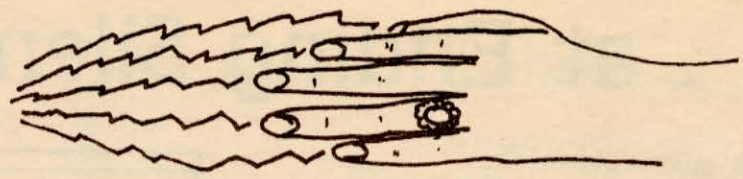


Summer of the Loucheux

Image, Peter Pictorial Archive Series

A black-capped chickadee singing, the drone of a big kicker, the whine of a chain-saw. These are some of the sounds of the award-winning film (best documentary, best director, 1983 Alberta film Awards) "Summer of the Loucheux". Some of the pictures are of a young woman from Arctic Red River, NWT, her father and her niece at fall fish camp near the Mackenzie River. We spend some time visiting their wall tent home and go to grannie's place to listen to some stories of the old days.

This film captures a feeling of something that is missing from our lives in the cities which is becoming less of a reality season by season in the bush.

Linda Rasmussen has more details about how you can obtain this beautiful film. Contact her at Tamarack Films,
11032 76 St
Edmonton T5B 2C6
(403) 477 7958.

Response To

Great Expectations

By Marilyn Guille

a flash of deja vu - i'd heard the story
once before somehow ...
another woman ... another artist, maybe -
but still, even the second time around,
the anger rises ... the tears ... the spitting
at my partner: i say to him
i don't care how enlightened
or liberated or wonderful you are
this is one of the things you can never comprehend -
not as a man.
and then ... his anger ...his tears ...his spitting
back at me: he says
and you can never comprehend
the shame i feel
for my half of the race -
then the embrace
to anesthetize the pain, the alienation
for both of us - and my thoughts then turn
to nelle and webspinner -
eight hundred miles and six long months ago
nelle and i ... face to face talking
art school, newsletter, union bay,
networking, festival,
battered women and all ...
and her-in-all
and the her-in-all-in-me
responds with joy in spite of it all
to be reunited
through the pages of this women's magazine,
just a pen away.

Mothering

By Laura Lee

"Sometimes I feel
like a motherless child,
A long way from home."

Haunted by these lines
Whenever women gather.

The Patriarchy has stolen
our mothering from us.
We need it so badly.
For ourselves. For our sisters.
Our own blood-mothers,
more robbed than we.
We mother them when we can.

Whenever women gather,
small symbolic gestures of mothering,
sometimes fussing, sometimes awkwardly.
And sometimes the Goddess shows us
the deeper, huger bedrock
we know is there to be reclaimed,
when women nurture women.

Many of us are completely stifled,
put out of commission
by the many layers of male camouflage
we wear to live in the jungle
as Not-Women.

When we know of the bedrock
we know that we cannot return to men.
Ever.
They must go away and not return.
until they bring a new meaning.
As yet unconceived.
They have not even
made a word for it yet.

We cannot live in that far-flung future.
We must live here. Now.
We must seek out,
and become, the lioness.
To refuse the burglar his booty.
To Break The Rules.
To give true mothering to women.
To re-create the world.

ACTION

Community workshops

The "Ending the Silence" conference was a wonderful and challenging experience for many women, but we all know that we haven't finished talking about violence against women - we've only just begun. The Alberta Society of Women Against Violence (ASWAV) has also developed a workshop kit for use in community workshops, and will help interested people to organize a community workshop on issues of violence against women.

This help can include: assisting you to develop ideas about what your community needs, finding appropriate resource people and materials, and supplying you with the kit for use in the workshop, and in your community.

Carla Nolan and Anne Runyan are working at the ASWAV office to do all this, but their grant runs out in August, so please get in touch soon. Even if your workshop can't take place till later than August, they can put you in touch with all the necessary people and materials now.

The ASWAV address is 9926 112 St Edmonton, phone 488 8863.

I haven't come a long way yet - and I am not your baby!

ASWAC-SPONSORED

Regional conferences

If you are interested in participating in or organizing regional conferences concerning the status of women in Alberta, contact:

South/Central Region -
Suzn 246-8755 or
Jennifer 283-6283

Northeast Region -
Deanna 743-2890 (Ft. MacMurray)
or
Barbara 853-2847 (Vermilion)

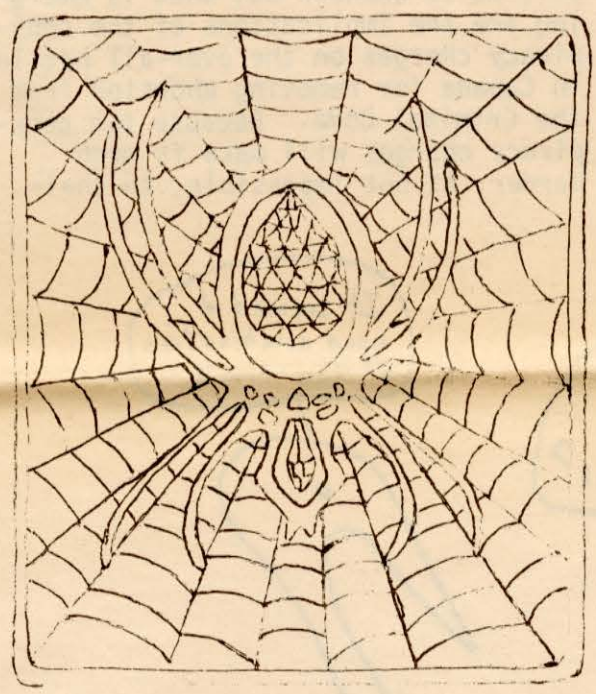
Northwest Region -
Marilyn 778-3669 (Whitecourt)
or
Marty 356-3797 (Hythe)

Or call Susan Thompson at the ASWAC office 424-3073

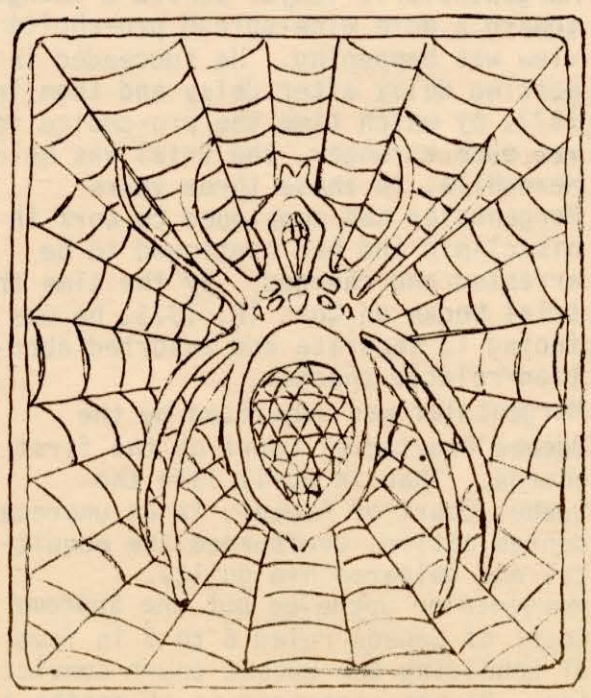
SUMMER FESTIVAL

Caught in Web

We'll be bringing our webspinning supplies and workshop to the Women's Summer Festival July 29, 30 and 31 on Prince's Island at Calgary. Anyone may drop in and be part of the creation. The summer festival supplement will be distributed with the August issue of Webspinner.



Webspinner now travels with a beautiful mascot, given to her by Valerie Deacon of Tsawwassen. It's kind of hard to describe, but I'll try! It's a spider, in a web, made of fine wrought metal, with a crystal body and head. Hanging in the sunlight here at the Summer School she looks serene and lovely, and is looking forward to visiting you in your community.



Self direction

In choosing to take responsibility for my own life I have also chosen to take responsibility for a name of my own. My name is now SUZN MORGAN and the name I leave behind is SUSAN L. VENSEL.

"For every woman who is denied meaningful employment or equal pay, there is a man who must bear full financial responsibility for another human being"

Nancy R. Smith

COMMITTEE AGAINST RACISM

Mother of Many Children

July 13 7:30 p.m.

From the series "Films About Canada's Native People", this film is an album of native womanhood, portraying a once proud matriarchal society. For centuries it has been pressured to adopt different standards and customs but is now fighting for equal status and opportunity.

Place: Memorial Park Library,
1221 - 2 St. S.W.
Calgary

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

Education committee

Is your organization interested in Civil Disobedience Education? Do you have special needs? Write us about your specific concerns or special areas of group interest:

WEBSPINNER
c/o Box 1573
Edmonton, Alta. T5J 2N7

FEATURE: ABORTION ISSUE BACK IN LIMELIGHT

Conspiracy charge underhanded move

By Meaghan Dean

The charges laid following the June 2 raid and closure of the Morgentaler clinic in Winnipeg indicate the focus of the legal battle is not going to be on challenging the present Canadian abortion law but on winning a case against Morgentaler--at any cost.

When Winnipeg police raided the clinic they seized documents, personal papers, closed down the clinic and took eight people into custody. Charges were not laid immediately and the eight were released the same day. Five days later, all eight--two doctors, four nurses and two counsellors--were charged with conspiracy to perform an illegal act. They were not charged under Section 251 of the Criminal Code, namely, performing an illegal abortion. All eight have plead not guilty and the trial is expected to take place in September or October.

Since the clinic opened in March, Manitoba's New Democratic Party (NDP) government made it clear charges could be laid if the clinic continued to operate. Though three months passed before police did make their move, the fact that they did really came as little surprise to those working closely with the clinic, for they suspected police were only waiting until they were sure to get the evidence they needed. Nonetheless, the suddenness and callousness of the police action still left many outraged. One woman was in the middle of an abortion when police broke in, requiring her to be quickly transferred to hospital so the procedure could be completed. For many the incident was starkly reflective of the generally insensitive and violent attitudes authorities have towards women and their right to reproductive integrity.

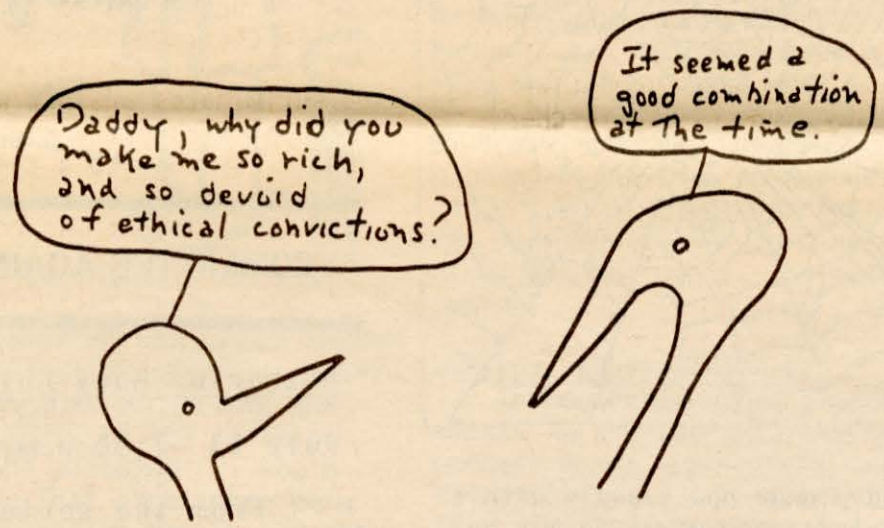
nat the results of the court case will be is unknown but what is emerging are the implications of the conspiracy charges on the over-all battle in Canada for removing abortion from the Criminal Code. Because the conspiracy charges will make it much harder, if not impossible, to challenge the existing abortion law directly, it is possible that while the individuals charged may be found guilty, the existing abortion law could come out of it unscathed.
"The Manitoba attorney general department and the police have learned from the mistakes of the Quebec case (1973 Morgentaler case) and they are doing their utmost to win," says Carol Rosset, co-ordinator of the Manitoba Coalition for Reproductive Choice in Winnipeg. "This is not a case of a fair trial or of trying the issue. The They are just out to win and to win by whatever means. This conspiracy charge is doing nothing but harm to women."
The conspiracy charges "cloud the central issue", namely, to challenge Section 251 of the Criminal Code, says Rosset. It means the case will be "one step removed from the actual act of abortion" so a defense based on providing a needed service will be difficult to use. Even if they are acquitted, she adds, it would be on the conspiracy charge, so no precendent-setting change in the existing law itself would result. The whole conspiracy route "is an underhanded move on the part of the attorney general," she says.

Rosset also suspects another reason they did not charge the eight with performing an illegal abortion was because then charges could not have been laid against Morgenthaler. "They're not going to be happy unless they get Morgenthaler. He's been a real pain to government. The conspiracy charge is really aimed at getting Morgentaler. The charges against the other doctor, the nurses and the counsellors is simply an attempt to intimidate the staff--they want the clinic to close."

She also points out that a conspiracy charge does not require the prosecution to prove an illegal abortion was done, but only that an agreement on a plan to do so had taken place. This means patients will not have to be called as witnesses--witnesses who would probably be hostile to the prosecution.
"From an evidentiary point of view (a conspiracy charge) is less likely to arouse the sympathy of the jury," she says.

As for general public reaction to the clinic closure, "people are angry and outraged at the government for allowing this to happen," says Rosset. "A lot of pro-choicers here are NDPers and they are outraged at what their party is doing. They see this (the government's position) as putting a black mark on an NDP government."

While there is a very strong, vocal and active anti-choice element in Manitoba, Rosset maintains there is a "silent majority out there of people who are pro-choice. Laying these charges will hopefully get a lot of those who are sitting back or sitting on the fence into action."



Not the first time in court battle for Dr. Morgentaler and clinics

The Winnipeg abortion clinic case is not the first time Dr. Henry Morgentaler has been at the eye of a moral and legal hurricane raging around the abortion issue in Canada. For many, Morgenthaler has become the symbol of the long but dogged compaign to do away with Canada's inequitable and oppressive abortion law.

It was not long after the abortion law was changed in 1969 that the Montreal physician opened his first free-standing abortion clinic. Police raided it in January 1970. He was arrested and several days later charged with performing an illegal abortion. Once charged, he and his staff were released and he promptly went back to work. He was again arrested and charged, this time with conspiracy to perform an illegal abortion. A patient was also arrested, but police later decided to drop the charges after she "agreed" to testify against Morgentaler.

It was three years before Morgentaler came to trial on the first charge. In 1970 only the first murmurs of pro-choice public opinion could be heard and Morgenthaler's lawyer sensed a change toward a more wide-spread pro-choice view was happening. He succeeded in getting delay after delay and then in 1973, by which time the pro-choice voice was much stronger, the trial was held. Meanwhile, in those three years Morgentaler had continued to work in his clinic and had continued to be arrested and charged. By the time the trial began on Oct. 18, 1973, he was facing 13 separate and assorted abortion-related charges.
Morgentaler was acquitted by the Quebec Provincial Court on the first charge. Then in April 1974 the Quebec Court of Appeal, in an unprecedented action, overturned the acquittal and delcared him guilty.
Morgentaler appealed but the Supreme Court of Canada ruled 6 to 3 in favor of upholding the Quebec court conviction. He was sentenced to 18 months in

Cont'd. p.23

Manitoba judge a woman-hater

Judge Mike Baryluk of the Manitoba provincial court maintains that "any woman who wants an abortion should be given a razor blade". The remark was made recently in the presence of two court employees and a newspaper reporter.

The resulting outrage expressed by women's groups prompted Manitoba Attorney General Roland Penner to order an investigation. He has asked his staff to prepare a report on the comment.

"I think it is a particularly cruel and sexist remark for any individual to make," said Carol Rosset, coordinator of the Coalition For Reproductive Choice at Winnipeg, adding that she questions whether this judge would be fit to preside over an abortion-related case.

Judge Baryluk, meanwhile, refuses to explain his remark, adding that judges are allowed to have predjudices and these would not prevent him from acting impartially on the bench.

Regina case emotional experience

Regina pro-choicers have just gone through being close to the action around the Joseph Barowski court challenge of the abortion law. They have learned much and want to share their knowledge with women in other places who may face a similar situation. Citizens For Reproductive Choice in Regina is compiling a written presentation on what has happened, and will send it to women's groups across the country.

The aim is to pass on information about how the media treated the case, and the pro- and anti-choice positions, the way the general public and pro-life groups acted and 'our feelings about all this as a pro-choice group actively involved,' says Nancy Pool of the Citizens For Reproductive Choice. 'We feel that what happened here is pretty general to the rest of the country.'

The tone of media reporting was generally pro-life in its editorials, but tended to be cautious about giving extensive coverage to the various pro-choice demonstrations and other actions carried out around the case, she says. The anti-choice groups were very active during the case - for one demonstration Catholic high school students were let out of school to attend. She feels it is very important for people that pro-choice groups do alot of basic organizing which includes lobbying, and demonstrations in order to both educate the public, and balance out the high-profile nature of the anti-choice groups.

For many Regina pro-choicers, the court experience was very active and intense. 'We feel, as people who have lived through the experience, that it had a profound effect on us emotionally - there were times when we felt helpless,' says Pool. 'Yet I think the experience has solidified us as a group. We have an excellent group made up of a variety of women coming from a lot of different situations who are concerned about the issue.'

Few words in the constitution may determine abortion issue

By Meaghan Dean.

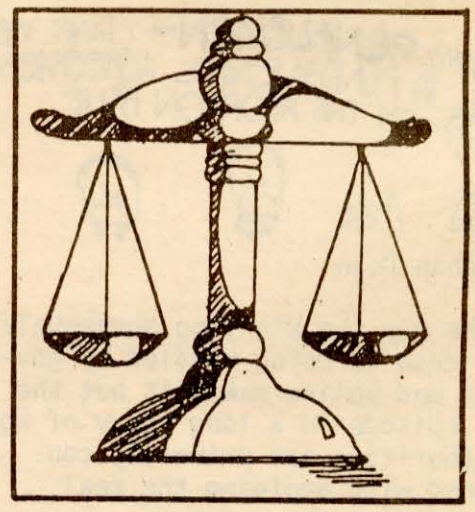
The law courts have once again become centre stage for the latest concerted effort to change Canada's abortion law. At present there are three major challenges to the legality of abortion under way, with a fourth soon to be launched.

One of them is instigated by anti-choicers and three by pro-choice supporters. Three of the four cases are focussing on the new Canadian constitution, while the other involves a conspiracy charge in connection with the operation of a new abortion clinic. By all accounts, it looks as though the future of access to abortions in Canada is going to be determined by how a few words in the constitution are interpreted.

Going to bat for the anti-choicers is Joseph Borowski, a former Manitoba MLA and staunch Catholic known for his publicity-seeking anti-abortion activities. In his case, recently heard in Regina, Sask., Borowski tried to prove that a fetus is a person and is therefore entitled to protection under the "right to life" enshrined in the constitution. His argument is based on the conviction that the fetus, as opposed to the female, has stronger claims to legal protection under the Charter of Rights. "All we want is a declaration that the 1969 additions to Section 251 of the Criminal Code are unconstitutional," says Morris Shumiatcher, Borowski's lawyer.

The Borowski case was heard in May before Mr. Justice W.R.Matheson of the Court of Queen's Bench of Saskatchewan. Justice Matheson turned down applications from three groups to intervene in the case as they were concerned the federal government lawyer would not defend as well as he could. Two of those groups were the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League (CARAL). Justice Matheson is not expected to hand down his decision on the constitutionality of abortion until the Fall.

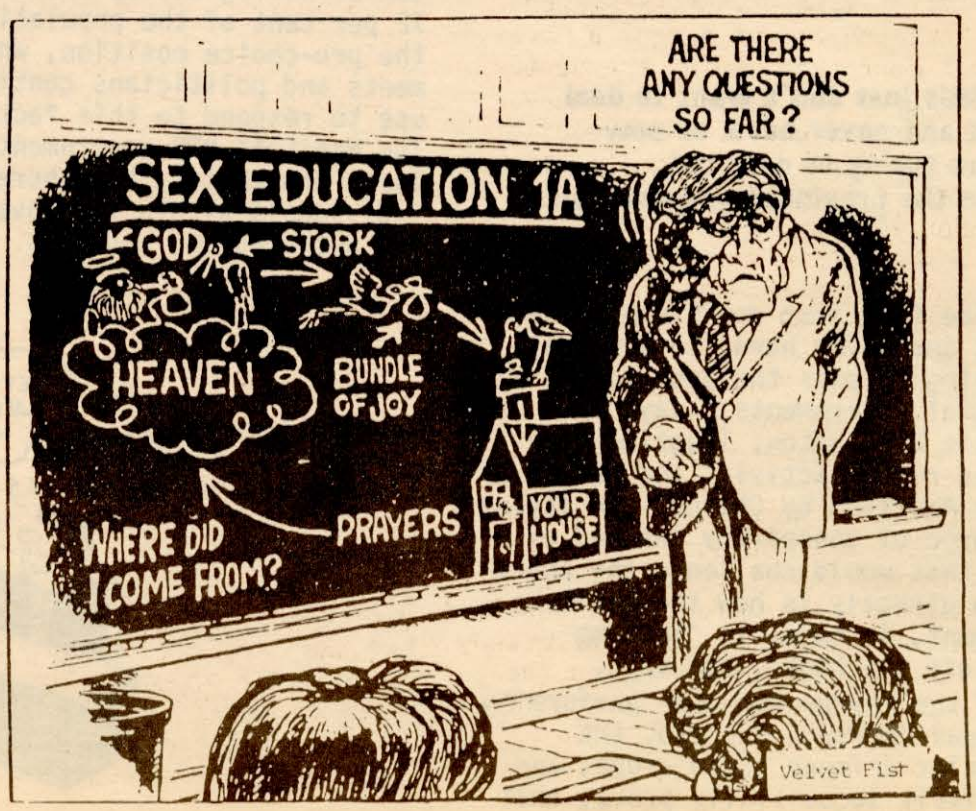
Arguing on behalf of the pro-choice position are Norma Scarborough, president of CARAL, and Dr.



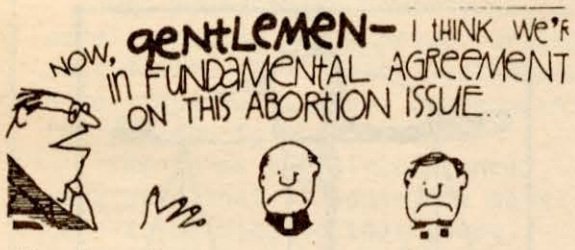
Henry Morgentaler, best known for his successful challenge to the abortion law in 1973. Also, the Manitoba Coalition for Reproductive Choice is planning to launch a challenge in the Supreme Court using a constitutional basis for their argument.

CARAL's challenge is based on Section 7 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms which states: "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principals of fundamental justice." CARAL contends that the abortion committee system denies women security of person and involves a process which is in contravention of the principles of fundamental justice. The law discriminates against women because it denies them the right to state their own case to a committee, to be represented by a lawyer and to appeal decisions the committee has made. This case is expected to go to court later this year.

The Morgenthaler challenge is not based on the constitutionality of the present abortion law, but rather on a direct testing of that law by opening free-standing abortion clinics in Winnipeg and Toronto. He believes that by offering a far superior service to that available in hospitals and by proving need for the service he will be acquitted again when charges are laid. (For more details on Morgenthaler see other articles in this issue).



The "issue": Avoiding the real issue



By Meaghan Dean

The way the Winnipeg Morgentaler clinic case is being handled by government and police makes it but the latest episode in a long story of how the authorities are primarily con-concerned with avoiding the real issue.

For women, the real issue is a woman's right to unconditional choice and control over her own body. The real issue is that the present Canadian abortion law denies that right. The real issue is that this right will continue to be denied as long as any part of the "law of the land" presumes to dictate what a woman can or cannot do with her body.

For most governments, politicians and the legal and medical establishments, abortion is an issue--but not one they either wish or understand to be based on a woman's right to control her own body. For them, the "real" issue is how to avoid being the one responsible for interpreting, creating, amending or abolishing a law that would prove to be the thin edge of the wedge for a vital component of the patriarchal status quo.

For them abortion is a hot potato and their manipulations and legal gymnastics to make sure the potato stays up in the air or burns someone else's fingers has been going on for some time. The 1969 amendments to the abortion law were such that its wording shifted much of the responsibility for its interpretation from the federal government to the medical profession. Besides resulting in inequitable application of the law, being left to play judge is a role doctors for the most part resent or feel nervous and overburdened about. Since then, women have also kept up their pressure about the unacceptability of the law and the medical profession has been shoved increasingly into the limelight of culpability for the generally tenuous access Canadian women have to abortion.

"The feds just don't want to deal with it and never have, so now they are trying to pass the buck to the provincial governments."

"The feds just don't want to deal with it and never have, so now they are trying to pass the buck to the provincial governments," says Claudette Reed Upton, longtime reproductive rights activist and member of Calgary Abortion By Choice. In laying the charge of conspiracy instead of a charge that would challenge the abortion law directly is how the Manitoba government, in turn, is "letting itself off the hook", she says.

If the charge had been performing an illegal abortion instead, the Morgentaler defence could argue, and quite likely successfully prove, that the clinic is providing a needed service. If the jury agreed and decided on acquittal, the provincial government would then be forced to consider accrediting the clinic because proof of need is one of the basic requisites for getting accreditation. Accrediting hsopitals is a provincial responsibility. "The provincial government doesn't want that in its lap," says Reed Upton. They don't want to be the ones held politically responsible for setting the precedent that would open the way for establishing free-standing abortion clinics in Canada.

Most of the mainstream powers-that-be involved in the abortion issue have different agendas, she says, "and women's right to control their own bodies is not on the agenda of any of them". The medical profession does contain support for changing the abortion law, but the motive is not increased reproductive rights for women. For some doctors a change would mean increased money to be made from free-standing clinics. For many others, the motive stems from the medical profession's traditional hatred of government interference--an interference symbolized by the onus placed on doctors by the present legislation, she says. "The medical profession is like a little Vatican and they band together like a herd of musk ox when they encounter anything that they see as impinging on their territory."

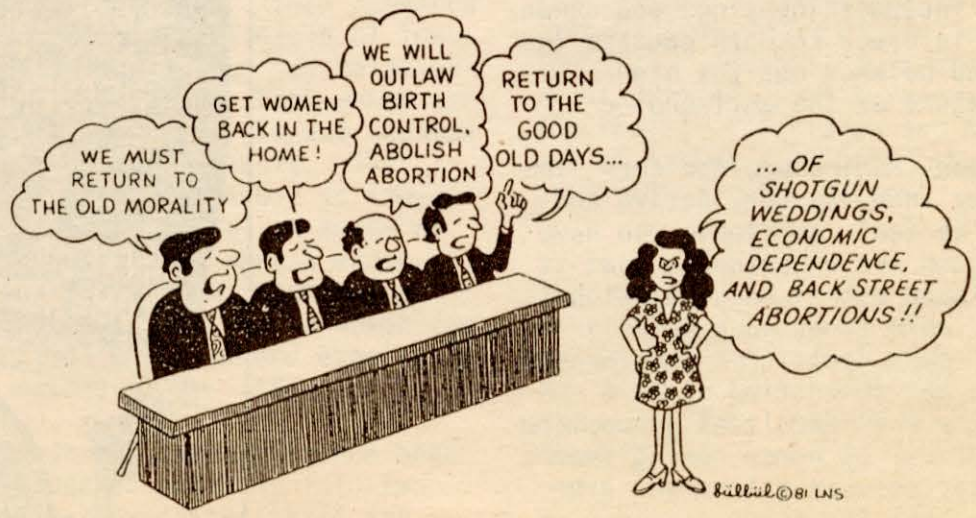
For politicians the agenda is to avoid incurring the wrath of pro-lifers who are much more immediate and direct with their pressure on elected representatives, she says. Politicians "will continue to get away with this as long as the mail they receive is 4 to 1 pro-life to pro-choice". Few are willing to come out and say they are pro-choice even if privately they are inclined to be sympathetic to the pro-choice position. "They know what the Gallup Polls say but what they also know--what's more immediate to them--is that they have an eight-inch-thick folder of pro-life letters and a one-inch-thick folder of pro-choice correspondence," she says.

One of the more intriguing aspects arising from the current activity around abortion is the implication of having Gallup Polls showing that 72 per cent of the population supports the pro-choice position, while governments and politicians continue to refuse to respond to this fact, she adds. The Manitoba NDP government is by and large pro-choice, but there are key individuals within the government who are anti-choice, she says.

While the ambivalence and resistance of the authorities remains essentially similar to that surrounding the 1973 Morgentaler case, the mood and organization of public opinion and the pro-life groups have changed, says Reed Upton. "We're facing something different in terms of the Right than we were 10 years ago. Then, the Right was low-key and insignificant in terms of influence. Now they are highly organized and politically very consistent." The pro-choice groups have not developed in the same way, she adds. As the Women's Movement becomes more sophisticated in its analysis and widens to include the many related issues "we have become fragmented" and we just don't have the energy to put into one issue as they do. The Right has a political and organizational advantage so far, however erroneous or harmful it may be, of having stuck to and refined being a single-issue movement, she says. Its one issue is to maintain the concept of "family", whether in the home or at the community, provincial, national or global level. "Everything they stand for hangs together," she adds. "Their ideology is very simple."

"we can't go on putting our bodies into illegal clinics and risking arrests for taking control of our own bodies."

However much the abortion issue needs to include a variety of strategies, the work to make the legal changes must go on, she says. The present law must be changed so that ready access to safe abortions is not illegal. Those capable and willing to work in clinics cannot be expected to continue being forced to operate outside the law. "It is asking too much of women seeking abortions and those working in clinics to always be under the strain of the risk of arrest and court charges. We can't go on putting our bodies into illegal clinics and risking arrests for taking control of our own bodies."


WE MUST RETURN TO THE OLD MORALITY
GET WOMEN BACK IN THE HOME!
WE WILL OUTLAW BIRTH CONTROL, ABOLISH ABORTION
RETURN TO THE GOOD OLD DAYS...
... OF SHOTGUN WEDDINGS, ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE, AND BACK STREET ABORTIONS!!
Bulbul ©81 LNS

Present abortion law far from satisfactory

Abortion is legal in Canada only if performed according to very limited and specific rules set down in the Criminal Code of Canada in 1969. Section 251 of the code forbids abortion, except when performed in an approved or accredited hospital. The abortion must be approved by a Therapeutic Abotion Committee comprised of at least three doctors (none of whom may perform the abortion). This committee may allow an abortion only if "continuation of the pregnancy would, or would be likely to endanger the life or health of the woman".

In reality, this means the present law makes abortion in Canada a matter between a woman and--her doctor, federal government, provincial government, the judiciary, the attorney general, pro-life groups, pro-choice groups and the media.

What contributes to this situation is that while the law does provide an exception under which an abortion may be legally performed, its wording is vague enough that the interpretation and application of this law varies widely, depending on the opinion of the individual doctor or the moral - politics of the community and/or province in which the woman lives. Specifically, the law does not define what it means by "health". This has produced widely varying interpretations such as that of the World Health Organization in which health is "...a complete state of physical, mental and social wellbeing..." to the very narrow idea of health as merely the absence of physical disease.

Another major loophole is that the law does not compel hospitals to set up abortion committees. This means Roman Catholic hospitals and small hospitals with fewer than four doctors on staff do not have them. A strain is put on hospitals which do and causes delays and late terminations. It also makes local hospital boards nervously sensitive to political pressure from pro- and anti-choice groups as pressure for establishment or abolition of therapeutic abortion committees becomes the battle ground in their fight to achieve their respective goals.

That this law is interpreted and applied indiscriminately and inequitably throughout the country has been known to the federal government for some time. A federal government-appointed Committee on the Operation of the Abortion Law (the Badgley Report of 1977), lists only 559 out of 1,348 civilian hospitals as eligible for performing abortions. The central finding of this commission was that "...the procedure provided in the Criminal Code for obtaining therapeutic abortion is in practise illusory for many Canadian women." Also, a recent survey by the Doctors for Repeal of the Abortion Law shows that:

-Canada's abortion law is unfairly and unequally applied and tends to discriminate against low-income and rural women--a conclusion also confirmed by the Badgley Report

-Access to safe, legal abortion will remain unavailable to most Canadian women until abortion is removed from the Criminal Code.

Calgary clinic doing very well

Foothills Hospital in Calgary has managed to greatly improve its abortion service, yet do so within the confines of the present law. A special abortion unit has been set up at the hospital and operates largely like an abortion clinic, but because it is attached to an accredited hospital, the unit can concentrate on abortion care legally.

The unit opened about a month ago. Abortion applications must still go through a Therapeutic Abortion Committee, but the Committee - headed by a woman doctor - meets far more frequently than most hospital committees. This one meets two or three times a week. It charges a flat rate of $50.

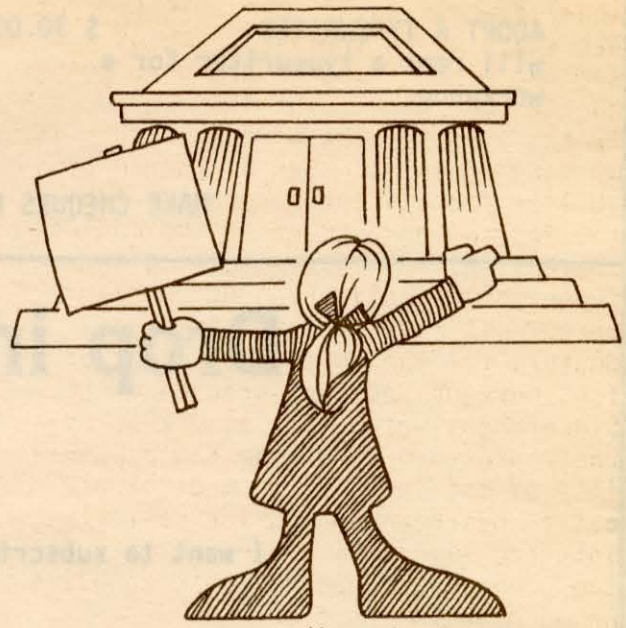
'It's working really well. Women only have to wait a few days,' says Claudette Reed Upton, member of Calgary Abortion by Choice. The effects of the clinic's existence are already being seen in the fewer number of women having to go to Montana to get abortions, she adds.

Not the first time cont'd.

jail plus three year's probation during which he was forbidden to perform abortions at all.

While in jail he was tried on yet another charge by the Quebec court and again he was acquitted. Although the Quebec appeal court upheld that decision, the federal minister of justice ordered a retrial on the first charge. Again he was acquitted and this time the Supreme Court refused the Crown's appeal of the second jury acquittal. Meanwhile, Morgenthaler, who had a heart attack while in prison, was released after serving 10 months. In November 1976 the newly-elected Parti Quebecois government in Quebec dropped all charges against him.

The whole early Seventies case was characterized by high-profile media coverage, heated public debate and large demonstrations, particularly by pro-choice supporters. One newspaper described the whole process as an "ordeal by prosecution". Though being the focal point of all this was a strain, Morgentaler says it has also been helpful in publicizing the need to improve access to abortion for women. He admits it has also made him a star, that he likes being a star and that he will go on being one if he can help make the important and needed changes. Since the Winnipeg clinic was closed down June 2, Morgentaler has opened another abortion clinic in Toronto.



Women's Resource

ACTIONS PLANNED

Defence funds, petitions and demos.

Defence funds, petitions and demonstrations are shaping up to be the main actions taken by pro-choice women's groups around the Winnipeg Clinic court case.

Calgary Abortion By Choice is encouraging Alberta women to send money to the Manitoba Coalition For Reproductive Choice. Make the cheque out to the coalition, and either stipulate that it is for the defence fund or make the contribution to the coalition in general. The coalition is also a member organization of the Committee for the Defence of All Aid People. The coalition address is: Box 51, Stn. L., Winnipeg, Man., R3H 0Z4.

It is extremely important that the Manitoba Premier Howard Pawley and Manitoba Attorney General Roland Penner receive letters from concerned pro-choice supporters indicating their displeasure with the court action against the clinic, says Claudette Reed Upton of Calgary Abortion by Choice. Pawley is strongly pro-life, she says, and while Penner is personally pro-choice, she feels that, as Attorney-General, he has handled the clinic situation badly by leaving the matter of what to do about it up to the police. Letters to Pawley and Penner can be sent care of the Manitoba Legislature, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3C 1H5. She also recommends that NDP party members include expressions of their dissatisfaction with the party in their letters.

The Canadian Abortion Rights Action League (CARAL) - an excellent source of background information on the abortion issue - is a nationally focused organization, so will not be dirently involved in local organizational activities surrounding the clinic case. However, it strongly urges support of local pro-choice efforts.CARAL will also be sponsoring a National Choice Day to be held in September or October. Groups are encouraged to watch for more details on National Choice Day as they become available. CARAL's address is: Box 935, Stn.Q, Toronto, Ont. M4T 2P1.

Adoptors, donors . . .

This month, 2 mailings were adopted by Carla Nolan and one by Leslie Ayre-Jaschke.

Unspecified donations were received from Trish Wright and Laurie Pettit.

Thankyou all.

Intensive caring costs money --- adopt a life-support item

Here are some ideas - and your own. Suggest some of the larger items to your women's group or business. Adoptive parents will be listed in the next issue unless you ask to remain anonymous.

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will rent a typewriter for a workshop.

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would allow for much more "around the province" news.

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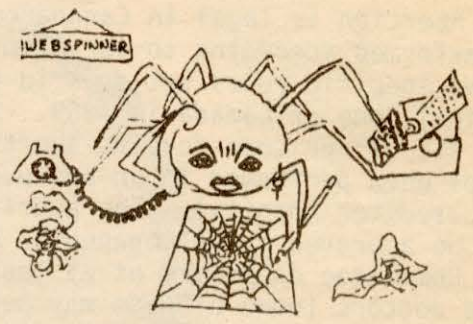

These women, all participants at the Summer School, took time out from all the other activities there to work on this issue of Webspinner.

Donna Anthony
Marilyn Assheton-Smith
Christine Bennett Clarke
Meaghan Dean
Ardelle Dudley
Clare Edington
Pamela Forsyth
Marilyn Guille
Barbara Hill
Pauline Hoskin
Julie Anne Le Gras
Mair
Suzn Morgan
Judy Moynihan
Laurie Pettit
Susan Thompson
Marlene (Marty) WhiteSun

This issue of Webspinner was produced entirely during the Alberta Summer School for Women Organizing, held June 17-26 at the Silver Creek Ranch in Water Valley, about 46 kilometres northwest of Calgary. The next issue of Webspinner will be produced in August (including a Calgary Women's Summer Festival supplement) at Fort MacMurray.

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SCHEDULE

And ain't I a woman supplement
Calgary, July 29, 30, 31.

Fort McMurray, August 19-24.

September - Edmonton, put out by a workshop group from the Ending the Silence conference.

October - Whitecourt/Edson

Next Spring - maybe Regina.